FREE

Kent on Sunday

www.kentnews.co.uk May 28, 2017

North & West edition No 766

TERROR

Armed police stepped up on our streets

Manchester attack sees security increased across county

CRIME

TV team probes Chillenden murders

They vow to 'uncover the truth' about 1996 killings

TRIBUTE

Remembering Sir Roger Moore

And looking back at his time spent living in Kent

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Even the heavens are cheering on Dreamland

THERE can be few places in Kent which are swollen by such a public feeling of goodwill than Margate's Dreamland.

As it re-opens this weekend, the county will be keeping its collective fingers crossed that the sums add up and the crowds flock.

A successful, thriving, exciting leisure facility within our boundaries is something which should benefit everyone.

At the point it slumped into liquidation last year, it had proved something of a masterclass in style over substance and the wholly mistaken belief that goodwill and nostalgia could compete profitably in such a fiercely competitive marketplace.

While there was much deafening applause that it was alive once more after such a battle, the truth was it was woefully underpowered and aimed fairly at the bearded brigade from Islington, rather than the families of Thanet, east Kent and the county as a whole.

The long-term absence of the one big rollercoaster ride last summer - the Scenic Railway - was another crushing blow which, you should have thought, was something which could have been foreseen and thus avoided.

Dreamland possibly only has one more throw of the dice left, so it needs to really deliver an experience for those who visit. Goodwill extends only so far and while we will all be cheering it on, it does need to repay our patience.

It cannot, and this may have been its downfall, seek to emulate its past. Parks have changed and more importantly we have changed. But by being versatile it can deliver something to the county's entertainment mix.

With glorious sunshine expected this weekend, the heavens too are are willing it to success. Let's hope for the best.

Editor **Chris Britcher**

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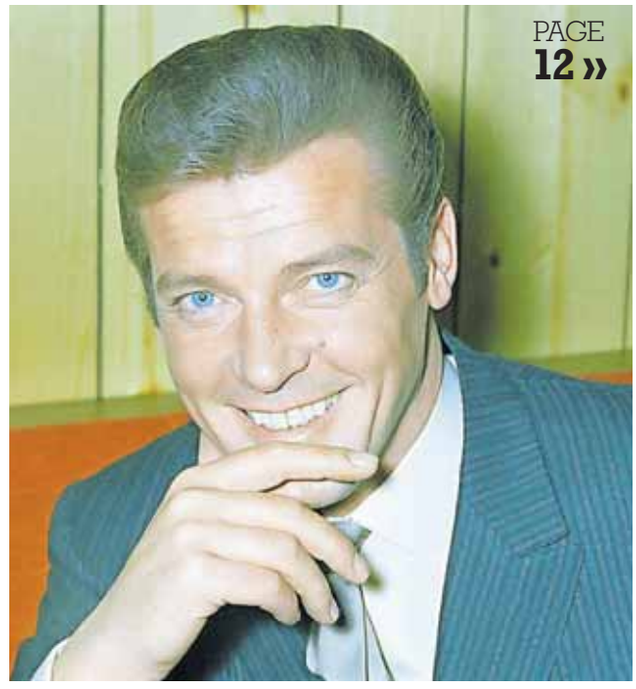

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More armed officers as county steps up defence

By Tom Pyman
tom.pyman@archant.co.uk

KENT Police chiefs have called in assistance from the Ministry of Defence as the terror threat level was raised to 'critical' this week following the Manchester bombing.

Security experts warned the government on Tuesday that another terrorist attack could be imminent, as armed soldiers were quickly deployed to guard "key locations".

MoD police officers were drafted in on Friday to provide extra assistance to the force although the use of the military has so far not been called for in the county.

In September last year, Kent Police stepped up its defence against the threat of terrorism by deploying armed officers at high-profile locations including Canterbury Cathedral, the Port of Dover, Bluewater and then Ashford Designer Outlet earlier this year after the force said it had received "positive feedback".

Officers have been spotted on streets in all corners of the county this week after also being seen briefly in the days following the Westminster terror attack in March, though chiefs have consistently insisted there is no specific threat to the county.

SECURITY: Police chiefs have responded to Monday's terror attack in Manchester

Despite this, the police force is liaising with the Home Office to regularly assess the national threat levels and what that means for our county.

A spokesperson said this week: "MoD police officers will patrol key locations to provide additional protective security and will be under the command and control of Kent Police.

"The national threat level remains at 'critical' and members of the public are asked to remain alert, but not alarmed.

"Anyone who witnesses anything suspicious should report it to the Anti Terrorist Hotline 0800 789 321."

Meanwhile, specialist firearm officers have also began patrolling Southern and Southeastern train services for the first time.

Chief constable Paul Crowther from British Transport Police, said: "This is part of our national mobilisation plan to deal with the current and ongoing threat.

"It is important to note that we do not have any specific intelligence in relation to train services but are taking this action to ensure we can protect and reassure the public."

MEP demands return of the death penalty for terrorist criminals

THE death penalty should be returned for terrorist crimes, according to a south east MEP.

Janice Atkinson, who lives in Chislehurst and stood for Ukip in Folkestone and Hythe before becoming an independent politican, made the comments in the wake of an attack in Manchester which killed 22 people, including children.

Dozens more were left injured following the attack by a suicide bomber at an Ariana Grande concert at Manchester Arena on Monday.

Ms Atkinson said: "Much needs to be done to eradicate this evil. But there is one simple step which we can take now: we must bring back the death penalty.

"This is the first time I have called for this. For decades I have shifted in both directions: taking any life is wrong: it's right to execute certain types of killers, but what about miscarriages of justice?

"The risks of miscarriages of justice have now been largely overcome by the huge advances in DNA testing to a point of near-infallibility.

"Many will argue that I'm calling for revenge killings, motivated by hatred. Others will argue that I'm inhumane, that we live in a civilised society.

"Then there will be those who say that the death penalty is not a deterrent, that the warped perpetrators want in any case to die as martyrs.

"None of the above arguments stand up. Not now. We are at war and war crimes and terror cannot be given any quarter or allowed any glimpse of victory.These people are not deranged psychopaths, they are indoctrinated into an ideological belief that involves all out war against us."

But her comments were met with derision on social media this week with many pointing out that as suicide killers took their own lives, it was misjudged.

Carter stands unopposed to be named KCC leader again

PAUL Carter was once again confirmed as leader of Kent County Council as the authority met for the first time on Thursday since the local elections earlier this month.

Cllr Carter, who became leader of the authority in 2005, stood unopposed for the role.

The Conservatives romped to power by claiming 67 of the 81 seats on offer following the vote on May 4.

Sevenoaks' David Brazier was appointed chairman and Ashford's Mike Angell vice-chair.

Rob Bird was also confirmed as leader of the opposition for the Liberal Democrats. He replaces Trudy Dean who confirmed she was stepping down as leader last week.

KoS has moved offices - be sure to note our new address

KENT on Sunday is on the move - so please note our new address when writing in.

We're moving to more modern offices at The Panorama building in Ashford town centre and will be based there from Tuesday.

Which means for all correspondence - including readers' letters and details of the events you're staging or great stories we should be covering - you'll need to send them to our new address.

All editorial correspondence should be sent to Kent on Sunday, Room G46, The Panorama, 130 Park Street, Ashford, TN24 8EU. For our commercial team, address letters to Room G54.

All telephone numbers remain the same as does our email: editorial@kosmedia.co.uk.

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Thunder warning amid all that hot sunshine

THIS week's scorching temperatures may be rudely interrupted by thuder and heavy rain this weekend, forecasters have warned.

On Friday, a yellow rain warning was issued for Kent from noon today (Sunday) and into Monday as the hot weather breaks with thunderstorms and downpours.

There are warnings it could lead to some surface water flooding in places bringing possible disruption to transport and making for difficult driving conditions.

But before that, we should be bathed in sunshine with temperatures in the mid to high 20Cs. It is likely to be slightly cooler around the coasts.

The weather next week will see temperatures return to those more normal for the time of year.

County Hall calls for transport chiefs to put foot to floor over Stack

By Tom Pyman
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PLANS for a lorry park to ease the problems caused by Operation Stack should "push on at pace" due to uncertainty over Brexit, according to Kent County Council's transport chief.

The government first announced in 2015 it was to pledge £250m to build a holding area "the size of Disneyland" for lorries after the county was blighted by gridlock two years ago.

It earmarked the village of Stanford, near Folkestone, just off the M20 as the ideal location for the park, but campaigners have vehemently opposed the move and launched a judicial review against the decision.

However, that hearing has now been pushed back until later this year following Theresa May's announcement of a snap general election on June 8, meaning progress has stalled.

While Stack hasn't been in operation since the lorry park was first proposed, the prospect of a changing relationship with France under new president Emmanuel Macron, as well as the need for Britain to negotiate free trade agreements with the European Union after Brexit, has sparked concern among many that there could be delays on a regular basis at Kent's ports.

GRIDLOCK: Lorries on M20

Speaking at a full council meeting, cabinet member for transport, Matthew Balfour, said: "KCC working with Shepway District Council continues to urge the Department for Transport and Highways England to work at pace to deliver a solution to Operation Stack.

"I understand that Highways England have suspended all work until the outcome of the judicial review is resolved. I am not aware that a revised hearing date has been set yet, but the department has advised that it will not be before October."

Elham Valley Tory Susan Carey suggested the newly-elected KCC should "also be given the time to consider the need for this scheme, because it has been nearly two years without Operation Stack".

Cllr Balfour said: "We're going into a period of some doubt as to our relationship with the continent and I have no guarantees we're not going to have problems with HGVs backing up across our roads again, so I think we should push on at pace – if such a thing exists in Highways England."

ABANDONED: Cats found in car park

Boxed kittens found dumped in Tesco box

HALF a dozen tiny kittens were found abandoned in a cardboard box in a Kent car park last weekend

A couple were walking their dog at Ranscombe Farm Nature Reserve, in Cuxton, on Sunday morning when they spotted the Tesco box dumped in the car park.

Jane Pook, from the local RSPCA centre, said: "When they got closer to the box with Tesco text printed on the side they spotted a message scrawled on the cardboard in pen: 'Pls find us a good home'.

"And inside they found six tiny kittens who must have been very frightened and very disorientated."

They took the kittens straight to RSPCA Leybourne Animal Centre, in West Malling, where they were checked over by a vet and found to be covered in fleas but otherwise in good health.

The six-week-old tabby and white kittens - now named Arnold, Brittney, Charlie, Justin, Orlando and Sylvester, after film and music stars - are now being cared for in a foster home.

"They're only young so we've got them into special foster homes which should help their development," Ms Pook added.

"Then, if they're not claimed, we can start looking for new homes for all of them which I'm sure won't be difficult."

Lifeboat crews urge 'don't panic' in water

WITH good weather forecast, those soaking up the sun by rivers or the sea after being advised to try and float rather than panic if they find themselves out of their depth in cold water.

Explains Alan Carr, crew member of Gravesend's RNLI: "The river looks very inviting when the weather's nice, but there are many dangers including tides, submerged objects and the shock of cold water.

"At the moment the average water temperature is around 12 degrees, anything below 15 sends your body into cold water shock.

"The instinct is to try and swim and gasp for air, but you end swallowing water, that's why we're telling people to float, and let their body adjust to the cold temperatures."

Its advice is to fight your instinct to panic or swim hard, lean back in the water to keep airways clear, open your body up, extending arms and legs, pushing your stomach up and gently move your hands and fee to help you float.

Will county get link to Amsterdam service?

EUROSTAR's much-anticipated direct service from London to Amsterdam will be on track by the end of the year, but bosses were unable to confirm whether Kent stations would feature en route.

The cross-Channel operator announced this week it was in the final stages of planning for the service to the Netherlands, which would also serve Rotterdam as well as the capital, while launching a new state-of-the-art train for its London-Brussels route.

Its e320 trains can operate on the European high-speed network beyond the UK, France and Belgium, but a spokesperson said further details with regards to serving Ebbsfleet and Ashford International had not yet been confirmed.

With over three million leisure and business passengers travelling by air between London and Amsterdam, chiefs describe it as one of Europe's most important routes.

The e320 train will be first introduced on the Brussels route today (Sunday) as part of a £1 billion programme of investment by Eurostar.

CCTV network saved after costs threat

PROPOSALS to axe Thanet's entire CCTV network have been unanimously quashed by council chiefs this week.

The local authority's current camera service has had little or no investment since its implementation in the late 1990s, which has resulted in much of the equipment becoming obsolete or not being supported any longer by manufacturers.

Now the council has set aside £409,000 in its budget for upgrading of the CCTV service and infrastructure and approved the option to enter into a partnership with BT, allowing them to be responsible for all camera upgrades including equipment and network, maintenance and transmission costs.

Meanwhile, neighbouring Canterbury City Council would monitor the cameras in its control centre at Canterbury.

Completely decommissioning the council's CCTV service was highlighted as by far the cheapest option, but the authority noted: "The reputational cost would be high."

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Row over iPads and iPhones handed out to KCC councillors

By Tom Pyman
tom.pyman@archant.co.uk

A NEWLY-elected councillor's decision to turn down an iPhone and iPad for his work has left Kent County Council chiefs furious.

Speaking to KoS this week, Conservative councillor Paul Cooper, who won the Maidstone South seat in this month's local election with 42 per cent of the vote, said he thought offering members the technology was a waste of public money.

However, senior sources at County Hall are understood to be enraged by the 29-year-old's decision, fearing it could compromise security of council data and information.

"The only conceivable reason why I would need an iPhone or iPad is for checking emails and documents which can be done on any phone or laptop," Cllr Cooper told us.

"Nobody elected me so that I could get a free phone, no one put their cross in the box for that. If you think of 81 members getting £1,000 of kit, a whole street could save on council tax for a year."

KCC chiefs pointed out in response that brand new phones and tablets were not being issued to all members, as some departing councillors' devices would be re-used.

Eric Hotson, cabinet member for corporate and democratic services, said: "I am disappointed that a new member, who has been in office for only a few days, did not come to me to talk about this issue and express his concerns. I would have explained to him why such IT items are offered to members to assist them in carrying out their extensive KCC duties, many of which are of a sensitive nature.

"In order for members to carry out their duties it is essential that they have access to appropriate IT systems at all times, not just when they are at County Hall.

"To do this in a safe and secure manner, KCC has a number of options which include the opportunity for members to use their own devices, the use of equipment issued by their borough or district council or a KCC laptop or tablet and a mobile phone.

"Members who choose to use their own private devices for KCC business will have software installed on their equipment that enables data to remain secure and enables us to wipe the device remotely should it get lost or compromised."

TECHNOLOGY: Councillor claims handing out gear is too much for taxpayer

Duo arrested over 'squirrel' roof scam

TWO people have been arrested on suspicion of carrying out a roofing scam in Tunbridge Wells, using a dead squirrel to claim householders have an infestation.

A 34-year-old man, and a 22-year-old woman on suspicion of fraud by false representation.

The man has been bailed until July 4 pending further enquiries, and the woman has been released.

Blood transfusion boost for cancer care

CANCER patients in east Kent are set to benefit from easier access to blood transfusions from next month.

Funded by the Hope for Tomorrow charity, East Kent Hospitals' Mobile Chemotherapy Unit will offer transfusions from within the vehicle. It means patients in Deal, Folkestone and Herne Bay can avoid a trip to the Kent & Canterbury Hospital.

Stables hit by blaze

STABLES in Walderslade were destroyed by a blaze on Wednesday night.

An investigation is under way into what caused the fire in Boxley Road after an emergency call was placed just after 8.30pm.

Around 60 per cent of the building was completely destroyed.

No injuries were reported.

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Jail for teen who ploughed car into group of 15 people

A TEENAGE driver who ploughed into 15 people on a trading park at almost double the speed limit, trapping one of them under the car in the process, has been jailed for 18 months.

Harlee Pendergast, 18 and of Green Lane in Eltham, lost control of a Black Mini One he was driving at an unauthorised meeting of car enthusiasts in the Medway City Estate in September 2016.

He pleaded guilty to four counts of causing serious injury by dangerous driving and one count of withholding information to obtain motor insurance at Woolwich Crown Court.

The unauthorised meeting took place off Sir Thomas Longley Road on September 30.

Despite driving in a 30mph zone,

forensic evidence suggests that the Mini was driving at 69mph in the moments leading up to the collision.

Detective constable David Holmes said: "While we accept that Pendergast did not set out to seriously injure people, his reckless and indefensible behaviour put a large amount of people at risk of harm.It is extremely fortunate that those injured did not lose their lives that night."

Our beaches fly the flag with clutch of top awards

A HOST of the county's beaches have won prestigious blue flags for their environmental standards - a major boost for tourism bosses.

The Keep Britain Tidy's annual Blue Flag awards saw a bumper haul for Thanet where Minnis Bay, West Bay, St Mildred's, Botany Bay, Joss Bay and Stone Bay all won.

Some 14 blue flags were handed out in the south east, with other local winners including Swale's Sheerness beach and Minster Leas and Canterbury's Tankerton beach near Whitstable.

Ten beaches also received seaside awards from the organisation - among them Margate and Ramsgate main sands, Viking Bay in Broadstairs, Herne Bay and neighbouring Reculver and Leysdown beach on Sheppey.

The awards are handed to those that meet the highest environmental standards and international bathing water quality standards.

Gavin Waite, director of operational services at Thanet District Council, said: "Thanet is one of the UK's fastest growing tourism economies and our spectacular, sandy beaches help us attract thousands of visitors every year."

Keep Britain Tidy's chief executive Allison Ogden-Newton added: "When you enjoy a day on the beach flying a blue flag or seaside award, you know you are on one of the safest, cleanest and very best in the country."

Rare bird born at trust

THE first baby chough chick in at least 150 years - one of the rarest birds and members of the crow famiy - has been born at the Wildwood Trust conservation centre near Canterbury.

The bird adorns the Canterbury City coat of arms.

Pupils' emergency pilot

HOLYWELL Primary in Upchurch was part of a pilot project in the classroom to help them prepare for emergency situations.

The Danger Squad aims to increase emergency understanding, awareness and how to respond. It was aimed at children aged five to seven.

Whitstable hit by crime

A 36-year-old has been remanded in custody at Medway Magistrates' Court after Whitstable town centre was hit by a crime spree early on Tuesday evening.

Shops and cars in Oxford Street, Cromwell Road and the High Street were damaged during the incident.

Seen a stag beetle?

WILDLIFE charity People's Trust for Endangered Species is encouraging gardens to report sighting of stag beetles in their gardens as part of its Great Stag Hunt.

It wants more people to help protect the species by creating sanctuaries in their gardens for them.

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Margate's Turner Prize

By Tom Pyman
tom.pyman@archant.co.uk

THE Turner Contemporary gallery in Margate is set to be the host venue for the prestigious Turner Prize in 2019 - a major coup for the successful Thanet venue.

One of the best known prizes for the visual arts in the world, the Turner Prize aims to promote public debate around new developments in contemporary British art.

Every other year, the prize leaves Tate Britain and is presented at a venue outside London.

In 2019 it will be presented at Turner Contemporary which, since opening in 2011, has been hailed for having a catalytic effect on social and cultural regeneration in Margate and east Kent, and has established an international reputation.

Gallery director Victoria Pomery said: "This is a truly transformative opportunity for Margate to be part of something which invites conversations on an international scale, connecting our audiences to outstanding contemporary art and inspiring future generations of creative talent.

"It seems even more fitting to host the prize here in Margate on the site where JMW Turner was so inspired.

"We look forward to working with our existing and new stakeholders and colleagues at Tate on this exciting initiative."

HOST: Turner will be focus of the arts world in 2019 when its hosts prestigious award ceremony. Picture: VISIT KENT

Alex Farquharson, director, Tate Britain and chair of the Turner Prize jury said: "It's an exceptional venue with ambitious exhibition and public engagement programmes.

"It has helped revitalise east Kent, and the area is also now home to an exciting artist-led scene."

Mike Hill, Kent County Council's cabinet member for community services, said: "This is excellent news both for Turner Contemporary and for Kent.

"As long-standing and major supporters of this world-class gallery, we are delighted that the Turner Prize itself will be coming to Margate."

Rob Kenyon, director of community services at Thanet District Council added: "Thanet is already the UK's fastest growing tourism economy so the publicity and interest that this prize attracts will provide yet another fantastic boost for the region and cement its reputation as a global cultural powerhouse."

The Turner Prize has previously been in Liverpool, Gateshead, Derry and Glasgow.

Rail service disruption

TRAVELLERS heading into London this bank holiday weekend are advised to check before they travel with Southeastern services not heading into three major stations due to improvement works by Network Rail.

Services will not run to or from Charing Cross, Waterloo East or London Bridge from Saturday to Monday.

In addition, there will be no trains between Plumstead and Dartford over the three days due to work on the Crossrail service into Abbey Wood.

Uni opens its £35m centre

THE University of Kent's largest ever academic building officially opened this week.

Some 150 guests attended the Sibson Building, named after professor Robin, who was vice-chancellor of the university between 1994 and 2001, and died earlier this year.

It will be home to both Kent Business School and the School of Mathematics, Statistics and Actuarial Science

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TV team set to 'uncover truth' of the darkest day

The murders of Lin and Megan Russell in 1996 will live on long in the memory, now a fresh look at the case will be the subject of a two-part BBC documentary

By Chris Murphy
editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

A TWO-part BBC documentary which re-examines the brutal killings of Lin and Megan Russell more than 20 years ago, says it intends to "uncover the truth" of an attack which stunned the nation.

Lin Russell, 45, was attacked as she walked her two young children home on a summer's day in 1996 in the village of Chillenden.

After picking Megan, six, and Josie, nine, up from their school in Goodnestone after they had returned from a swimming gala in nearby Canterbury, all three were approached as they walked across picturesque fields.

Following a frenzied attack with a hammer, Mrs Russell and Megan were killed, alongside their pet dog Lucy.

Josie was left for dead, blindfolded and tied to a tree, with extensive head injuries. Incredibly, however, she survived.

The murder sent shockwaves around the nation at the ferocity of the attack in such a scenic setting.

Michael Stone, now 57, from Gillingham was found guilty of the murders and is currently serving three life terms in prison. He has been told he will serve a minimum of 25 years in jail.

He always denied any involvement in the attack, maintaining his innocence in both his original trial in 1998 and a re-trial which was ordered in 2001. It means he is unlikely to be freed until at least 2023 when he will be 63.

Doubts have persisted about his guilt with no DNA evidence able to link him to the scene of the crime.

Now, a BBC documentary - starting this week - will revisit the case having been given unprecedented access to the original case files.

A spokeman for the corporation said: "With exclusive access to the vast collection of original case files, a team of independent experts has come together to re-examine the evidence. With backgrounds in policing, forensics, law and criminology, they will attempt to shed new light on the case and uncover the truth, whatever it may turn out to be.

"The team examines the details of the crime, and the forensic evidence found at the scene. They then turn their attention to the case against Michael Stone at court, and uncover some shocking details that never made it to trial."

Stone's lawyer, Paul Bacon, told us: "I have not seen the programmes yet, although I have done a lot of filming for it.

"One worrying aspect of the case was this missing shoelace. Without going into detail, it was used as a weapon, but has now disappeared.

"At the time, there was no signs of any DNA from Michael Stone on it, but did have the DNA of the victim and another person, as yet unidentified.

"DNA testing techniques have moved on since then, and so we wanted to have it looked at again during the appeal process, but it has since gone missing.

"It seems the police and forensic service are blaming each other for the loss, but this does not help Michael Stone if it has vanished, for whatever reason."

It has always been admitted by Kent Police that forensics were lacking in the original investigation.

A possible witness came forward to Stone's lawyer after a KoS story two years ago, but sadly vanished just as quickly as her suggestion of a suspicious Ford Sierra seen in the area at the time of the murders.

To futher muddy the waters, there were claims Levi Bellfield, the killer of Surrey 13-year-old Milly Dowler in 2002, could have been a suspect, having previously used a blunt instrument in two other murders he committed.

Bellfield, who along with Stone, is incarcarated at the top security Frankland prision in Durham, has denied any involvement in the attacks and challenged Stone to take a lie-detector test over the killings.

Previously, Stone's sister Barbara told KoS she is as sure as ever of his innocence, but has doubts about Bellfield.

She said: "I know my brother didn't do it, but I am not sure Bellfield did it either."

Born in Tunbridge Wells in 1960, he had a troubled upbringing which saw him put in a care home during which he was physically and sexually abused.

He had a criminal record from the time he was 12-year-old and went on to develop a drug habit which he fuelled by operating as a burglar.

His car had also apparently been seen in the Chillenden area where a lawn mower had just been stolen.

Even now retired detective superintendent Nick Biddiss says he has doubts about the conviction, but quickly adds: "The fact remains Michael Stone was found guilty and even after the appeal, the conviction was upheld."

A spokesman for the programmes said: "This is a murder that has stuck with the public for two decades and we decided to take a much closer look at the case."

The case also saw a change in the law. The government decided the Mental Health Act needed an update to ensure people who are considered mentally ill and highly dangerous can be held in secure psychiatric hospitals against their will for the protection of the public. This was not possible before, as the only people who could be held like this had to be considered treatable.

Josie Russell made a remarkable recovery amid fears she would be forever damaged by the attack.

She and her father, Dr Shaun Russell, who worked as a university tutor at the University of Kent in Canterbury at the time of the attack, moved back to north Wales not long after the traumatic events - where the family had lived prior to coming to Kent.

Now 30, she works as a textile artist close to the Snowdonia National Park. Dr Russell continues to work at a Wales university.

• The first of the two-part documentary, The Chillenden Murders, is broadcast on BBC2 at 9pm on Tuesday, May 30. The concluding part is a week later.

EXAMINATION: Team of experts have pored over the original case files for the Chillenden Murders

DEVASTED: Lin Russell, Megan, Dr Shaun Russell and Josie before tragedy struck

Inspirational and 'tremendous', world bids farewell to Sir Roger

Best known as James Bond during the 1970s and 80s, Sir Roger Moore lived for many years in the county. In the week in which he passed away, we take a look back at one of our best-loved superstars

TRIBUTES have been paid this week to Sir Roger Moore who passed away on Tuesday at the age of 89.

The actor lived in Kent for many years - firstly in Bexley, before it became a London borough - and then in Tunbridge Wells.

He also fondly remembered taking holidays in the county - visiting the then-affluent Cliftonville in Margate with his parents between the two world wars.

He was in the county just last year to film what would be one of his last movie appearances in The Carer.

Best known for his TV roles in The Saint and The Persuaders in the 1960s and early 70s, it was as James Bond for which he will forever be remembered.

He portrayed 007 on seven occasions, among them classics such as Live and Let Die, Moonraker and The Man With the Golden Gun.

Knighted for services to charity in 2003 - he considered his work as an ambassador for Unicef as his proudest achievement - he died after a "short but brave" battle with cancer at his home in Switzerland, his family confirmed.

Fellow Bond, Sir Sean Connery, 86, said: "I was very sad to hear of Roger's passing; we had an unusually long relationship by Hollywood standards, that was filled with jokes and laughter. I will miss him."

Born in Stockwell, London, in 1927, he and his parents would holiday in what he described as the "posh end" of Margate as a child.

Speaking several years ago, he said of his first holiday memory was "going to the seaside, to Cliftonville, with my mother and father as a child between the wars.

"My mother's family lived there so we used to stay for two weeks, which was a joy."

He moved to Bexley in his 20s to move in with second wife, the Welsh singer Dorothy Squires. Some 13 years her junior, he met her at one of her regular parties at her mansion in St Mary's Mount in Wansunt Road. It has since been demolished and replaced by housing.

It was in 1958 he received the fame he craved with the lead role in TV drama Ivanhoe. But it was The Saint in 1962 which catapulted him into the big time before he portrayed 007 from 1973.

Frankie Fitzgerald from the Centre Stage Theatre Academy in Bexleyheath told us: "Roger Moore is one of my inspirations for becoming an actor, the Bond films are such a huge part of my life and I know many of our students are huge fans of the franchise.

"Mr Moore's wit and humour mean he will go on to inspire many more young actors. Forever keeping the British end up."

Only last year, he returned to Kent as he starred as himself in The Carer alongside Brian Cox.

Filming took place at a number of Kent locations, including Boughton Monchelsea Place, Sutton Valence Care Home, Sutton Valence Main School, Sutton Valence Preparatory School, Headcorn, The Lord Raglan Pub in Staplehurst and the Theatre Royal in Margate.

Don't expect a lot of screen time for the late star, however, his role is small.

Announcing his death this week, his family said: "The love with which he was surrounded in his final days was so great it cannot be quantified in words alone.

"We know our own love and admiration will be magnified many times over, across the world, by people who knew him for his films, his television shows and his passionate work for Unicef, which he considered to be his greatest achievement.

"The affection our father felt whenever he walked on to a stage or in front of a camera buoyed him hugely and kept him busy working into his 90th year, through to his last appearance in November 2016 on stage at London's Royal Festival Hall."

In a story typical of the affection he held for fans, TV writer Marc Haynes, now 41, described him as a "tremendous man" for the attention he paid to a young fan - and then again in another chance meeting years later.

He told how his seven-year-old self was thrilled when the actor asked him to help keep his Bond identity secret to avoid being traced by villains.

Mr Haynes shared the story via Facebook after the news broke on Tuesday that his movie hero had died aged 89.

He wrote: "As an seven year old in about 1983, in the days before First Class Lounges at airports, I was with my granddad in Nice Airport and saw Roger Moore sitting at the departure gate, reading a paper.

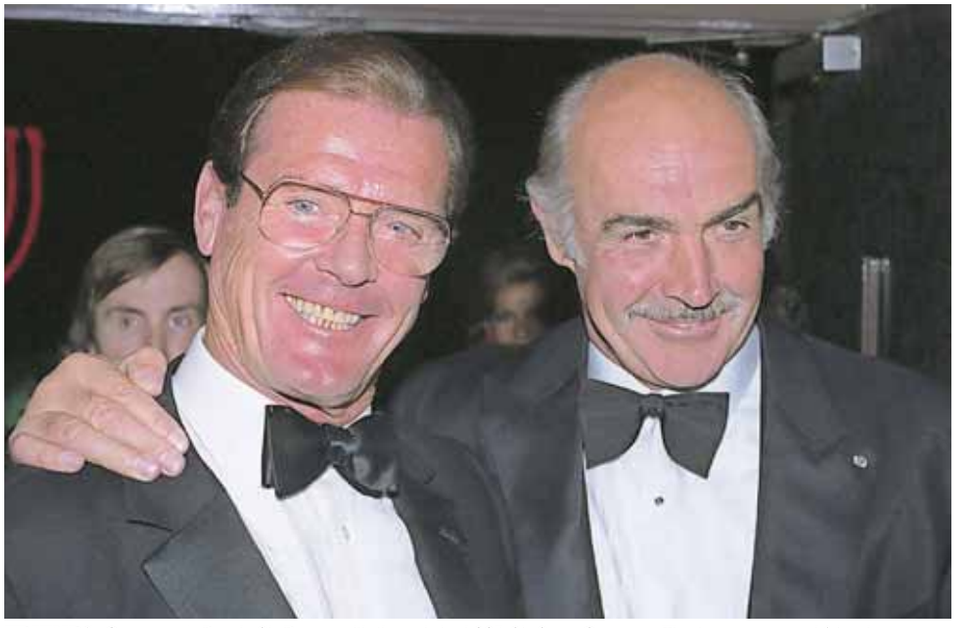
"I told my granddad I'd just seen James Bond and asked if we could go over so I could get his autograph.

"As charming as you'd expect, Roger asks my name and duly signs the back of my plane ticket, a fulsome note full of best wishes.

"I'm ecstatic, but as we head back to our seats, I glance down at the signature. It's hard to decipher it but it definitely doesn't say 'James Bond'.

"I tell my grandad he's signed it wrong, that he's put someone else's name ... I remember staying by our seats and my granddad saying 'He says you've signed the wrong name, he says your name is James Bond'.

"He leant over, looked from side to side, raised an eyebrow and in a hushed voice said to me, "I have to sign my name as 'Roger Moore' because otherwise ... Blofeld might find out I was here.



FRIENDS: Our name's Bond...Sir Roger with the original 007, Sir Sean Connery. The two were good friends

YOUNG: Moore lived in Kent with second wife Dorothy Squires

"He asked me not to tell anyone that I'd just seen James Bond, and he thanked me for keeping his secret. I went back to our seats, my nerves absolutely jangling with delight.

"My granddad asked me if he'd signed 'James Bond'. No, I said. I'd got it wrong. I was working with James Bond now."

Mr Haynes, from north London, went on to become a writer and producer, working on a number of BBC programmes for both radio and television.

At the age of 30 he took part in a scriptwriting project that involved children's charity Unicef and one of its key ambassadors, Sir Roger.

He said of the star: "He was completely lovely and while the cameramen were setting up, I told him in passing the story of when I met him in Nice Airport.

"He was happy to hear it, and he had a chuckle and said 'Well, I don't remember but I'm glad you got to meet James Bond'.

"And then he did something so brilliant.

"After the filming, he walked past me in the corridor, heading out to his car - but as he got level, he paused, looked both ways, raised an eyebrow and in a hushed voice said, 'Of course I remember our meeting in Nice. But I didn't say anything in there, because those cameramen - any one of them could be working for Blofeld'.

"I was as delighted at 30 as I had been at seven. What a man. What a tremendous man."

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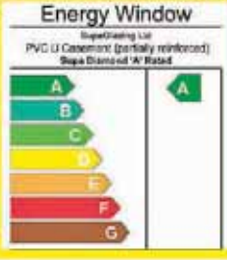

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Dreamlands back, but can it now make the sums add up?

It's the park everyone wants to be a success and this weekend it returns after a £25m overhaul

By Tom Pyman
tom.pyman@archant.co.uk

DREAMLAND is back once again this weekend following a multi-million pound facelift, in what may be one last throw of the dice to safeguard its future.

The Margate theme park and leisure complex opened its doors to visitors for the first time this year on Friday, offering a range of exciting new events and activities.

However, Dreamland has not been without its challenges and controversies in its rich history, which dates back some 150 years, and some scepticism over whether its latest reincarnation will prove a winning formula is to be expected.

It closed to the public to much disappointment in 2005 before its iconic scenic railway, a Grade II-listed roller-coaster recognised as the oldest in the country, was largely destroyed in an arson attack three years later.

The park then re-opened to great fanfare in 2015, but various problems with the centrepiece ride and the operator, Sands Heritage Ltd, falling into administration, blighted its revival.

Over the past few weeks it has undergone another drastic redevelopment, courtesy of a £10m cash injection by Cayman Island-registered firm, Arrowgrass bringing its total investment up to £25m.

Even this year it has been faced with delays, after originally planning to open on April 28, but chiefs are now confident everything is falling into place just in time for the peak summer period.

CEO Steven Mitchell said: "We've had to install new infrastructure, including water and waste over the last few weeks, and the last thing to do was make sure the ride operators are trained.

"We made a decision to open now for the bank holiday and half term and wanted to future-proof the park as much as possible.

"The plans are ambitious and we'll have much more going on through the summer.

"Visitors will notice a huge difference in the look and feel of the park and we want to make it so people feel they can come for the events or just for the day with friends."

The highlight of those events perhaps is the Demon Dayz festival on June 10, headlined by Gorillaz - fronted by Blur singer Damon Albarn - for which 15,000 tickets sold out "in about 15 minutes", according to Mr Mitchell.

Dreamland will also now feature wi-fi across the park, a treetop bar, a 15 metre festival-style bar and an expanded street food dining offering.

This is all in addition to the newly restored vintage rides, event spaces and interactive art installations announced in February.

Other plans for 2017 include investment into Dreamland's back of house areas, including specific facilities for artist-led events such as green rooms and catering, with a new state of the art industrial kitchen which will service both the Hall By The Sea and Ballroom for large catered events, bringing multi-functional use to the event spaces.

The Cinque Ports pub project has also expanded, with well over a million pounds being invested to upgrade two floors of the Grade II-listed building, returning it to its former 1930s glory.

Trying to marry Dreamland's famous history with modern exciting additions has likely proved a challenge, but Mr Mitchell said that combination is key to ensuring its appeal is as great and far-reaching as possible.

"I think [the style] works well, it has such a rich heritage anyway, dating back to the 1860s, so there's a lot to build on and we're focused on making the most of that," he said.

"We set out a vision and managed to secure the investment for it so now we want people to come and experience it for themselves.

"It's up to us to make them want to stick around, eat some food and try a cocktail because there's a lovely treetop bar that people can walk up and enjoy great views of the coast.

"We've set some targets and our offering is so different from previous years. We've got 10 or 11 days to see what the reaction is.

"We've been advertising in London as well as locally because the offer we have got appeals beyond Kent.

"We think we're able to attract more visitors to us and it'll be a huge boost to the local economy.

"We're a local business and we want to be supportive to others and bring tourists from outside the area."

Margate is widely recognised as a thriving tourist hub, growing in popularity with visitors from the capital, and perhaps even more so following Dreamland's rebirth and news that the Turner Contemporary gallery - barely a beach pebble's throw across from the park - is set to host the prestigious Turner Prize in 2019.

However, in the wake of Monday's terror attack in Manchester, bosses had to make last minute revisions to their security arrangements ahead of the much-anticipated re-opening this weekend.

Mr Mitchell said: "We have a robust plan for the park and each of our events but in light of the tragic events this week we are in touch with the police locally and reviewing our arrangements.

"We will probably make a

few changes and there is likely to be a more visible security presence as people come into the site.

"We're in discussions about what would be appropriate for both the opening weekend and beyond."

The CEO pledges that Dreamland will still be completely free to enter, with thousands expected to stroll through the gates over the holiday period.

The park will be open until the end of half term on June 4 and will then operate on weekends until the start of the summer holidays on July 21.

From there, Dreamland will welcome visitors every single day until early September, with prices for the rides ranging between £1.50 and £5.

Unlimited day passes can be booked in advance for the school holidays, at £16, with wristbands for youngsters under 1.25m priced at £11.50.

Annual membership is also available for £70 and £50 as well as a family ticket offering at £175.

RETURN: Dreamland is open once more and fingers are crossed it delivers. Pictures: SHERADON DUBLIN

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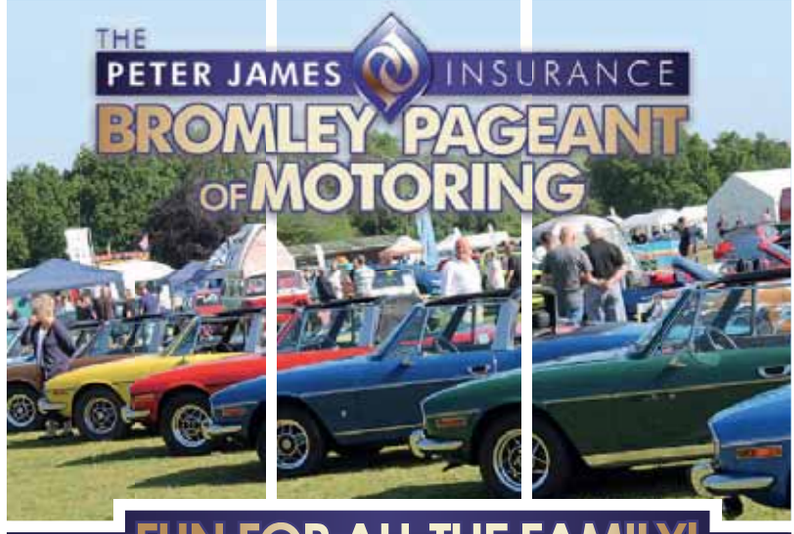

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EVENT: The show is always a big draw. Pictures: ANDY ARCHER

FINALE: Fireworks bring the evening to a dramatic end

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Support for dads is unlimited as group seeks to smash the stigma

The impact of mental health issues on men has been higlighted recently by royalty, but now a local group is aiming to provide a life-saving service for those for whom the pressures are just all too much

By Chris Murphy
editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

MUCH has been written about the impact of male mental health problems - now one man from the county is hoping to transform the way we handle the issue and shatter the stigma around it.

The high profile intervention of princes William and Harry last month and impact their mother's death had on their state of mind, catapulted the issue into the spotlight, but an organisation in Ashford is looking to provide real help at a local level.

Dads Unlimited is the brainchild of Nav Mirza, from Ashford.

He said there is so little help for men who feel the stresses of life are just too much, and are being overwhelmed with forces they can no longer handle.

Mr Mirza told us: "The purpose behind Dads Unlimited is three-fold.

"To offer practical advice and guidance on the legal issues around separation/divorce and access to your children; to support a dad's parenting skill development and to cope with their mental health and emotions; and develop a community of dads with problems.

"We allow them to open up about their emotional and mental health stresses and find support if they have been a victim of domestic and emotional abuse, post traumatic stress disorder or parental alienation syndrome. This list will organically grow as more and more men come forward.

"Mental heatlh has to be seen as acceptable if anything is going to be done to help these men in need before they take the ultimate step and end it all.

"Many will, and that is not something that should be allowed to happen these days. The health services are already over-run, so it is up to people like me and others to help these people in our communities.

"There is no stigma, and men should not be made to feel they are somehow second class if they find the pressures and stress of life becoming too much to handle.

"Often, all they need is some guidance and to understand they are not alone."

FOUNDER: Nav Mirza is the man spearheading Dads Unlimited

Former barrister Mr Mirza, 45, launched the group after battling his own personal trauma which he says took two years to resolve because of a lack of support for dads in need.

He told us: "We are not anti women or anti mothers; we are only pro dad."

Mr Mirza added: "Most of the dads we see are suffering from the emotional stress of separation. In some cases, which we are seeing more regularly, is the growing propensity of men who are victims of domestic abuse.

"Whilst the numbers are low, nearly all are suffering from some sort of emotional abuse. It could be the restriction of access to their children, or their immediate family and in some cases there are severe control issues at play.

"It is vital that in the arena of where family breakdown is played out, something must be done to cradle these men to help them. Invariably, if your separation is acrimonious, then there are often many casualties.

"It always leaves me with such a sense of sadness, that whilst we have support for so many people on so many issues, men seem to have been overlooked when it comes to family breakdown.

"What seems to be consistently forgotten is when you go through a divorce or separation, your family is breaking up meaning the death of all your hopes, dreams and joint aspirations, regardless of who has initiated it.

"Also, something deeper happens which doesn't really come to light until much later. Left unchecked, it can lead to clinical depression, anxiety, stress and in the worst of cases, attempts of self harming or suicidal thoughts. Mental health rapidly deteriorates. How as a society have we allowed this to happen?"

Kent County Council also has a similar campaign called Release the Pressure.

Now in its second year, it has won £150,000 in new funding to bolster the effectiveness of existing initiatives to reduce the number of suicides in the county and, once again, to diminish the stigma of mental health.

It wants men feeling under pressure to seek help, and was launched after the shock statistic emerged that suicide is the leading killer of men under 45.

The authority said in our county during 2016, there was a decrease in the numbers of people taking their own lives with 140 registered suicides.

Of these, 104, or 74 per cent, were men. This is a slight fall from 116 male suicides the previous year but the rate of suicide in the county is still higher than the national average, so more needs to be done.

> **"There is no stigma, and men should not be made to feel they are second class if they find the pressures and stress of life becoming too much to handle."**
>
> **Nav Mirza,**
> Dads Unlimited

KCC said during the campaign's first year, there has been a 76 per cent increase in the number of male callers to a special helpline.

That has sparked an award of £100,000 from the mental health programme at Health Education England's Kent, Surrey and Sussex (KSS) arm, to be spent delivering suicide prevention training to organisations and voluntary sector groups to improve the support available for people when they are going through rough patches in their lives.

KCC director of public health, Andrew Scott-Clark said: "We hope our campaign is helping to contribute to a culture where it is easier for men to speak about their problems in their lives.

"However every death from suicide is a tragedy, and we will continue to ensure that we do as much as we can to support everyone, male and female, when they going through tough times.

"We invite organisations across Kent to contact us about this new suicide prevention training – just one conversation between work colleagues, friends or team mates could help to save a life."

KSS has also delivered £50,000 to Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust, once more to enhance suicide prevention training provided to mental health professionals.

To avoid cracks in training programme delivery, both organisations are working in unison.

Live Well Kent can also help thanks to backing from Porchlight and the Shaw Trust. This is a one-stop shop where people can access a range of mental health and general wellbeing support within their local community and has already helped some 3,000 people.

Live Well Kent's Chris Coffey said: "From the numbers of people contacting us, we know that there must be more people out there who need our help. If you're struggling with mental ill health or know somebody who is, please get in touch."

To contact Dads Unlimited visit dadsunltd.org.uk.

HOW YOU CAN HELP RELEASE THE PRESSURE

RELEASE the Pressure is Kent County Council's campaign developed following in-depth research with a variety of focus groups that explored the very real pressures men find themselves under.

Individuals were thoroughly interviewed about their lifestyle and concerns and then on to the emotional turmoil they often felt as the contemplation of suicide grew closer.

One Kent man who used the service said: ''If I hadn't opened up, I wouldn't be here today.''

Another said: ''Talk to anybody who will listen, it can only help even if it takes some time to realise that.''

In the past 12 months, 6,577 men called the helpline and they now take a monthly average of 548 calls.

It's not just for men. The number of women calling the helpline was 12,668 over the past year, an increase of 23 per cent.

Alan Heyes from Mental Health Matters, which delivers the service, said: ''Not everyone has friends or family that they can open up to, but we know that talking about issues can be a great way to start to feel better. Speaking to someone in our team who isn't going to judge you, can help you start getting your life back on track.''

For help and support from the free and confidential service, dial freephone 0800 107 0160 any time of day all year or visit the website releasethepressure.uk.

Primary places 2017: Drop in numbers creates fresh issues

While plenty of our schools were over-subscribed, a number have found the shortfall in applications leaving them exposed when it comes to low numbers

By Peter Read
www.kentadvice.co.uk

THIS year has seen a remarkable fall in the number of children applying for places in Kent primary schools, a drop of 679 or 3.8 per cent of the total.

As a result, there are 11.1 per cent vacant places in reception classes across the county, rising sharply from a figure of 6.5 per cent in 2016.

There are still local pressures focused on several towns including Tonbridge with just one vacancy in one school; Ashford, two vacancies, apart from 14 in a school on the outskirts; Sevenoaks, full apart from 18 places in one school on the outskirts of town; and Tunbridge Wells just one school with 24 vacancies.

However, overall there is a far better picture than last year. Contrast these pressure points with: Ashford rural; Faversham; Maidstone rural; Shepway rural and Hythe; and Swanley and district; all with a fifth or more places empty across their schools.

The most popular schools vary considerably year on year, with just Great Chart in Ashford and Fleetdown in Dartford in the top ten both years.

Most oversubscribed school is Slade Primary in Tonbridge, turning away 43 first choices, followed by Great Chart, Ashford, with 41. Then come: Cobham, Gravesham with 35; Cecil Road, Gravesham, East Borough Primary, Maidstone, and St Mildred's Infants, all with 34 disappointed first choices; St John's CofE, Maidstone, 32; St Mary's CofE Primary Academy, Folkestone, 30 (a remarkable turn round from 2016 when the school had six vacancies); and Fleetdown and West Hill Primaries, Dartford, along with Langton Green Primary, Tunbridge Wells, all with 29.

At the other end of the scale, 18 schools have more than half their places empty, a sharp rise on last year. Seven Kent primary schools have had at least two years being half empty or more.

KCC offered places to 404 children in schools they had not applied to as all their choices were full; known as local authority allocated (LAA) children.

It is worth noting that reception class appeals will only succeed in exceptional cases, and for 2016 and where infant class legislation applied, there were just 12 out of 248 upheld. For the overwhelming majority of disappointed applicants, the only chance of success, albeit usually a small one, is through the school waiting list.

REVIEW OF THE COUNTY

ASHFORD: After Great Chart, other popular schools around town are: Goat Lees; Kingsnorth; St Simon of England Catholic; Victoria Road; and Willesborough Infants, all with more than 10 first choices turned away. Overall, there were just one per cent of vacancies in the urban area, 14 of the 16 at Downs View Infants in Kennington, Ofsted rating 'outstanding', which has seen its popularity plummet this year from previously being regularly oversubscribed.

GRAVESHAM: For 2016, there was just one school with vacancies in urban Gravesend and Northfleet, this year there are eight out of 18, as the number of applications fell by five per cent. The two Catholic schools, which led the field in 2016, have both slipped in popularity although St Joseph's, Northfleet, still has 26 first preferences turned away (37 in 2016). Most popular school is now Cecil Road, oversubscribed by 34 children for its 54 places. The large fall in pupil numbers has created plenty of vacancies in eight town schools.

MAIDSTONE: In 2016, urban Maidstone had just one vacancy in one of its 30 schools. For 2017, there are eleven schools with spaces. Most popular is East Borough, with 34 disappointed families. It is followed by St John's CofE with 32, St Michael's CofE Infant with 25 and Brunswick House with 15. There is a five per cent fall in Year R pupil numbers since 2016.

SEVENOAKS: A few years ago, Sevenoaks town was the hotbed of primary school admissions, with Riverhead Infants regularly most oversubscribed primary school in Kent, but the pattern has now changed dramatically. Lady Boswell's CofE is the most popular local school for the second year running, turning away 18 first choices, followed by St Thomas Catholic with eight first choices turned away. Meanwhile, Riverhead has surely seen the most dramatic fall in the county, down to disappointing just one family who placed it first choice for 2017. The only school with vacancies is Seal Primary, just outside the town.

SHEPWAY: The overall picture in

ANALYSIS: Writer Peter Read, the former Gravesend headteacher

Folkestone remains similar to that in 2016 with one startling exception, the popularity of St Mary's CofE Primary Academy having soared from to being the eighth most oversubscribed school in Kent turning away 30 first choices, after having six vacancies last year. Altogether nine of the 17 schools are oversubscribed, Sandgate and St Eanswythe's which usually head the list, next on 24.

SITTINGBOURNE: The number of oversubscribed schools in the town has dropped from nine to two out of 14, the total number of reception age children having fallen by 12 per cent. Most oversubscribed is Tunstall CofE, rebuilt on a new site just outside town, doubling its previous size to 60 children, but disappointing 16 first choices.

THANET: The most oversubscribed school is St Mildred's Infants, turning away 34 first choices. It is followed by Callis Grange Infants and St Ethelbert's Catholic with 23, and Priory Infants and Holy Trinity & St John's CofE with 22.

However, the big story here is not of individual schools but of the sheer unpopularity of the four schools run by the Kemnal Academy Trust (TKAT) which have 111 vacancies between them out of 254 available, which would have been much higher if it were not for 33 LAA children sent to them by KCC. The school with most vacancies is Ramsgate Arts Primary School, a new free school, with 42 of its 60 places empty.

TONBRIDGE: Apart from one vacancy at rural East Peckham Primary, every one of the 13 Tonbridge primary schools were full after April allocations (two schools with spaces in 2016). One in 12 of all children are LAAs, the highest proportion in Kent.

Slade Primary is the most oversubscribed primary school in Kent, turning away 43 first choices. Next come Sussex Road, with 26, and St Margaret Clitherow Catholic, with 11. Even St Stephen's Primary, placed in 'special measures' by Ofsted earlier this year, is full, albeit with seven LAA children.

TUNBRIDGE WELLS: For the second consecutive year, just one school with vacancies - Temple Grove Academy having 24 of its 60 places unfilled. Most oversubscribed is Langton Green, turning away 29 first choices, followed by Claremont with 24 and Bishops Down with 17. The town has the second highest proportion of LAA children in Kent, at seven per cent, or 60 children.

■ **You can read more in-depth analysis of the figures on Peter Read's website www.kentadvice.co.uk.**

Remembering classic duo's day of laughs on the railway

It was 70 years ago that Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy headed into Kent for a very special visit which still inspires fans to flock to follow in their footsteps today

By Chris Murphy

THERE are few truly iconic stars of Hollywood's golden era who remain as instantly recognisable today as they have done to generations gone by.

And that is certainly the case when it comes to comedy.

Charlie Chaplin and the Marx Brothers are two acts to transcend their on-screen personas to become part of popular culture and Laurel and Hardy are surely the third of a trinity of breathtakingly funny acts whose slapstick, clever comedy and clearly defined image today still remains both sharp and sweet.

Yet the thought of Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy, a duo who spent most of their lives in sun-drenched California, arriving in Ashford on a train before being driven down to Hythe to launch and travel on a miniature railway, seems almost as far fetched as some of their most memorable films.

Yet in March 1947 that is exactly what happened and Kent was blessed with an appearance by screen royalty as the duo helped the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway (RHDR) celebrate its 21st birthday in style.

Coming just two years after the end of the war, it pulled in thousands of fans desperate to catch a glimpse of their heroes.

Rob Lewis runs the Laurel and Hardy Magazine, devoted to the memory of the famous duo.

He told us: "It was during their 1947 tour of the UK when Laurel and Hardy were invited to take part in the 21st anniversary of the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway. They were asked to open the new track from Romney to Dungeness.

"They were appearing at the London Palladium at the time. On the day they woke in their London hotel, had breakfast, then travelled by train with their wives to Ashford, where a car was waiting to take them to Hythe Railway Station.

"There were several major newsreel companies there to record this historic event, in fact you can see these on the Pathe YouTube site."

They were greeted at the station by the mayor of Folkestone, Alderman Hughes and the general manager of the railyway Major JT Holder, who accompanied them on the train to New Romney.

Memorably, they performed a special skit after being handed a giant key for the opening ceremony. Typically of the high standards of the duo, they insisted on a couple of takes before they were happy with what they produced and which the cameras could then broadcast.

Mr Lewis said: "We have seen the outtakes and they did a few takes of them opening the gates of the bridge at New Romney with a huge key they were given to play with."

In the scene, Oliver Hardy tried to use the key to 'unlock' some fake doors to let the train out. After struggling for a few moments, he looks at the key while Stan just pulls the door open.

"Despite the rain that day," says Mr Lewis, "massive crowds turned out to watch their Hollywood heroes in the flesh clowning around. The 'Boys' as they are affectionally known by fans, travelled in one of the new Pullman cars.

"Mind you, Ollie had a spot of trouble trying to squeeze into small door of the coach."

After the inaugural ride, during which 'hot toddies' were served to passengers, lunch was taken at the Jolly Fisherman pub in Greatstone before returning to Hythe for tea.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the loyal band of fans who still gather to share their love of the comedy duo have made a number of pilgrimages down to the railway to stand in the footsteps of the stars. They have even brought down some of the duo's co-stars from their movies.

Mr Lewis added: "It was always my dream to bring fans of Laurel and Hardy to the line and run a special train.

"In 1984, as we were hosting the international Laurel and Hardy convention in Kent and London. I booked a special train, the highlight was it being pulled by the very same loco that pulled them in 1947. The loco was originally called Black Prince but it was later called Dr Syn, but with four bus loads of fans from all over the world, it was one of the longest trains they have run on the line. It was so long it had to have a push from the rear by the Green Goddess loco to get it rolling.

"On board were stars who had actually appeared in their films, Rosina Lawrence who starred with them in Way out West was joined by Henry

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Brandon who played the evil Silas Barnaby in Babes in Toyland.

"We also had little Jimmy Murphy with us - he was Stan Laurel's valet and a lovable character.

"When Henry Brandon appeared in Babes in Toyland in 1934, he was only 21 years old, but made up to look old, so when he joined us, he looked exactly like he was in the film."

He said: "Since 1984, I have helped organise several Laurel and Hardy events on the RHDR and they have always been popular."

LAUGHS: Laurel and Hardy at the Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway in 1947

DUO'S RISE TO FAME AND GLORY

STAN Laurel was born in Lancashire in 1890 and quickly set his heart on a career on stage. At 20 he joined a troupe, which included a young Charlie Chaplin, that would go on to tour in the US.

Chaplin's master performances in silent films saw him become a global superstar, while Stan Laurel plied his trade in a number of silent shorts - one of which, 1921's The Lucky Dog, saw him star alongside a young Oliver Hardy.

After signing up to the Hal Roach Studios, he was teamed up with Hardy and the pair had a natural chemistry. They started producing a whole series of short films which would not only see them elevated to superstardom but be repeated on television for more than 60 years, such was their endearing appeal.

They went on to make a series of full-length films too - the likes of Way Out West, Sons of the Desert and Swiss Miss - and enjoyed their hey-day throughout the 1930s.

Oliver Hardy died in 1957 aged 65. Stan Laurel, who never performed again after the death of his long-time friend, passed away in 1965 aged 74 in California..

Their films outlive them both.

TOP 20 AWARDS 2017 carehome.co.uk

Residents rate Breton Court care home one of the top 20 care homes in South East England

Breton Court in Tenterden, Kent has been chosen by residents and their families as one of the Top 20 care homes in South East England.

There are 3,119 homes in the South East of England, with the top 20 receiving an award from the leading reviews guide to care homes, carehome.co.uk.

The award is based on reviews of the care home written by their residents, plus their friends and relatives.

Davina Ludlow, Director of carehome.co.uk, said:

"We feel the best people to rate a care home are the residents and their families and friends. Their reviews reveal that many care homes are warm and happy places to live, where staff go that extra mile to ensure residents have a good quality of life and feel cared for.

"Breton Court proved that they provide a high standard of care and we'd like to congratulate them on being a Top 20 care home in South East England! It's a wonderful achievement to be recognised for being a highly recommended home by the very people you care for.

"Finding the right care home can be so hard. We hope that our awards will help to make people's care home search that little bit easier."

Kath Jenkins, manager of Breton Court said: I would like to say a big thank you to all my staff, for their hard work, commitment, professionalism and the loving care they give each and everyone of my residents. Care is not just about looking after the residents, but must include the family of that resident, the family should be able to sleep at night knowing that their loved one is being cared for appropriately. Each resident and their family become part of the Breton Court family.

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Grenadilla table lamp in saffron, pleated phula silk empire lampshade, table and mirror from a selection, available from Oka.com Picture: PA

Let there be light

If thinking of using the bank holiday to get the house ready for summer, one of the simplest style updates available is to make the most of your indoor lighting.

WHETHER it's playful touches with quirky lights, putting the beam back into bulbs, adding drama with a characterful chandelier or something as simple as changing a shade, the secret is to go with the flow and check out some of the current trends. After all, no-one wants their decor to be left in the shade...

Warm glow

"People tend to underestimate the use and importance of light during summer, as we have natural light for so much longer. Whether you're looking to add new lighting indoors or outdoors, the right lighting can really enhance your experience," says Chris Jordan, managing director at Christopher Wray.

"Indoors, it's great to go for fittings and shades that are lighter and airy, something that evokes warm weather and far-off destinations.

"The Floriss, with its colourful, petal-shaped folds, mimics the lush foliage outdoors, while the Planet's fabric sphere is lined in the same way as leaves. The natural form and colour of these pendants create a softer light that works brilliantly in the twilight hours."

And if you really want to pull the plug on dated fluorescent lighting, refreshing citrus colours are all the rage at Amara. Pair their orange and lime accessories against a white backdrop, to allow the colours to create a bold focal point in the room.

Holiday vibe

"If you don't have any outside space, transform your room into a romantic summer garden with a wooden chandelier, some plants and the gentle glow of candlelight," says Lucinda Waterhouse, OKA founder.

Chandeliers made out of wood create a holiday vibe but don't be afraid to consider crystal. Cut glass catches the light (crystal casts a soft glow) and along with being a thing of beauty, it can brighten the darkest of rooms.

Splash of colour

"Lighting is a great carrier for colour. During the summer months, inserting splashes of vibrancy and colour either in bases or shades is a great way to update your decor to complement the warmer weather," says Sophie Amini, designer, Pooky Lighting.

"Using lighting is less risky than doing a whole wall or a set of curtains in one bright colour. It can enhance a room yet allow for flexibility, and does not have to be a huge expense. We have a beautiful range of table lamps in a range of materials which are an affordable and simple way of adding colour and interest to your room without breaking the bank.

"Even when you switch them off, your lamp will still look beautiful."

Indeed, investing in a funky shade, or exotic palm-shaped table lamp, and mix 'n' matching with cutting-edge pieces that can be moved around is far more fun (and less risky) than committing to a curtain call that looks the same 24/7.

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Lavender Picture: PA

Keep critters at bay

While the mild weather and heavy rainfall of late may be good for the garden, it also provides an ideal breeding ground for pests and diseases.

ROT and grey mould may attack strawberry beds, codling moths could invade apple and plum trees, while aphids, carrot fly and slugs and snails will undoubtedly be doing their utmost to munch through our precious crops.

So, who are the main culprits and what can we do about them?

Slugs and snails

These are the most persistent and troublesome pests in wet weather, as they have a taste for tender edible crops, including lettuces and beans, while below ground they can burrow through potato tubers. Pick them off veg as you see them and be vigilant, particularly after rainfall. Alternatively, spread really sharp grit around vulnerable plants or at the edge of vegetable beds. If you have veg in pots, try wrapping copper tape around the top of the pot, which acts like a tiny electric fence.

Grey mould

This can be a real problem when strawberries are just starting to

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Vine weevil in an orchard **Picture:** PA

ripen. You need to avoid watering strawberry beds as the fruit develops grey mould if it's in contact with wet ground. Try to stop the rot by sliding a strawberry mat around the collar of each plant, or tuck handfuls of straw around the plants to keep the fruit off the ground.

Codling moths

The caterpillars of these small moths bore into apples and pears in summer, causing the fruits to ripen and drop early. Often you can see the small, brown, white-headed caterpillar at the core. To protect trees, set codling moth traps, which look like bright yellow or green tents, to which the insects are attracted, and then glued to the spot. Place a small amount of pheromone in the trap (this comes in the kit) to lure males in, and once they are out of the picture, females will remain infertile.

Vine weevil

These beetles can prove devastating to plants, particularly those in pots, but also among strawberry plants. The beetles eat the leaves between spring and summer while their white maggot-looking larvae eat the roots of the plant.

Often the discovery of the larvae is made too late, when the grubs have literally chomped their way through the roots of the plant, effectively killing it. On mild spring or summer evenings, inspect plants and walls by torchlight and pick off the adult weevils, which are black with dull yellow markings.

The vine weevil can prove devastating to plants, particularly those in pots but also among strawberry plants

To deter them, you can use biological nematodes Nemasys vine weevil killer in early spring or autumn, mixing with water and soaking the plant. Or use a special compost with an anti-vine-weevil ingredient when planting containers.

Woolly aphid

These insects, which often invade apple trees, hide under a white fluff which is often mistaken for mould. The blackish brown aphids suck sap from the woody stems from spring and, if not tackled, are likely to spread to younger shoots by summer. Their damage can lead to lumpy growths in the bark, which can split in the winter, and lead to apple canker. Scrub colonies with a stiff bristled brush in spring or early summer.

Carrot fly

If you haven't yet covered your carrots with fine insect-proof mesh, don't waste any time. It will also screen out greenfly and blackfly and won't trap heat underneath, so it can be used in summer.

Grow tall-growing crops like Brussels sprouts away from the blanket covering, and make each plant an individual covering so they remain caterpillar-free. Plants that need pollinating to produce a crop, such as beans and courgettes, will need to be uncovered when they start flowering, to allow access for pollinating insects.

Lavender

There's a place in almost any garden for this fragrant stalwart, which can be used as a low hedge, to frame a border or give you containers full of fragrance - as long as you're careful with watering, as if they dry out very badly, they're virtually impossible to bring back. They flower for a long time in summer and their flowers are great for cutting or drying. French lavender, whose flowers are topped with coloured 'wings' can be used as culinary herbs, while more fragrant Lavandula angustifolia 'Hidcote' make brilliant edging paths for borders and fill the garden with scent. Once flowering is over, give them a good trim with shears to tidy them up, but don't cut back into old wood or they won't recover.

Woolly aphids on a branch
Picture: PA

Looking after tomatoes

Vigorous vine tomatoes, those grown as single stemmed cordons, need to be trained now to stop side shoots developing and creating a more messy, less productive plant. You should get up to six trusses of fruit per plant, depending on how high you can grow it. When it's reached the height you want, stop it by cutting off the top and then its energy will flow back into the developing fruits. When the fruits are ripening, cut away the lower leaves of the first trusses to allow the sun to get to the tomatoes and promote more growth. Water and feed regularly while the plants are growing vigorously, but reduce watering later on for a sweeter flavour. Don't water irregularly or this can lead to blossom end rot. A dose of liquid fertiliser added to the water once a week should keep the plants in good condition.

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So perk up the patio, and if you need an excuse to celebrate, it's National Barbecue Week from May 29-June 4.

On safari

Go wild outdoors and embrace the jungle-icious trend....

"With so many stunning pots and unusual plants to choose from, you could make a beautiful statement with foliage such as ferns and palms that would totally suit this look," says Caroline Harvey, furniture buyer at Wyevale Garden Centres. "Revamp plain, traditional terra-cotta pots by painting them in rich, tropical green shades.

"Why not make a statement with a canopy in your outdoor space? A simple piece of fabric, dyed in a colour that suits your space, will create an intimate atmosphere."

Andreas rectangle dining table, and the pair of dining chairs, all available from Debenhams. Picture:PA

Serene sanctuary

"This year, outdoor furniture is all about casual dining and modular sets, so your setting can be versatile and suit different occasions, from dining to lounging," says Harvey.

"Accessories are key to this trend so choose plenty of cushions, paired with beautiful lanterns, candles and soft lighting to make this space as comfortable and cosy as possible."

Colour crush

Throw away caution and let rip with colour to add va-va-voom to an outdoor space that's perfect for entertaining after the sun's gone down...

"Brighten your outdoor space with Fifties silhouettes in hothouse hues," advises Nicola Gidlow, buyer for outdoor living, John Lewis.

"Practical pieces for al fresco entertaining sit happily with a selection of quirky accessories in this light-hearted look. A tropical palette and a mix of bold prints will complete the picture."

TOP: Taranto sofa set, available from Next. BOTTOM: House by John Lewis: Salsa Garden Sofa, table, side table, Sunny Life watermelon Inflatable, and inflatable on sofa. All available from John Lewis Picture:PA

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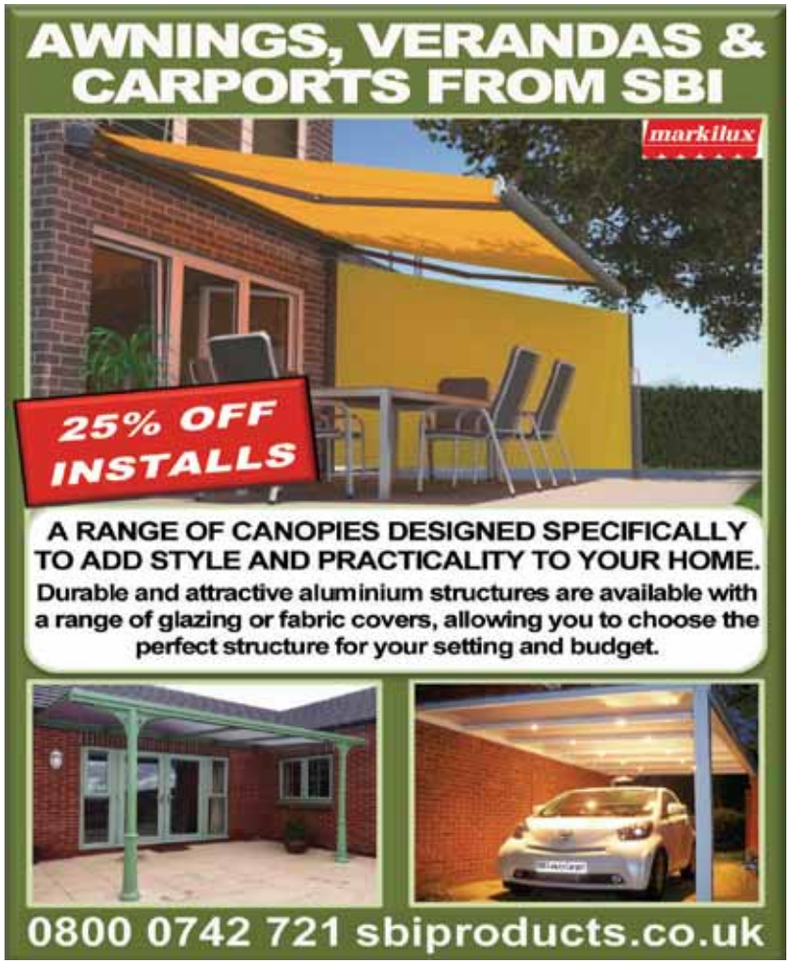
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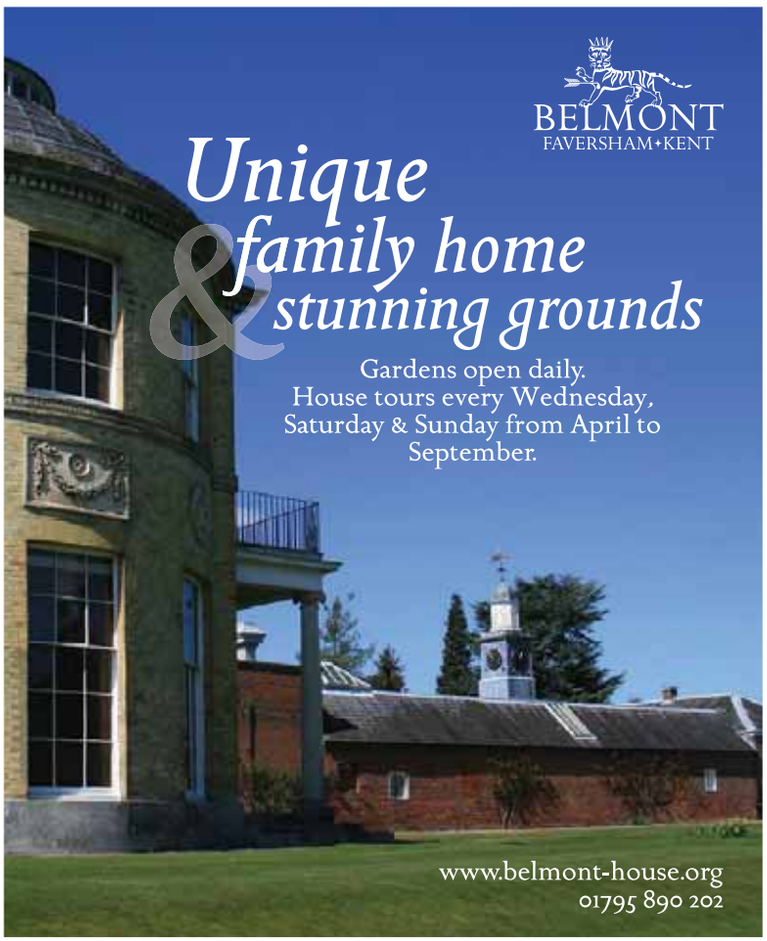
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To pay tribute to our longest-reigning monarch at 65 years and her 91st birthday, we are inviting visitors to our showroom **all day on the 10th June** to join the fun. Face painting and Pin the Tail on the Corgi are just some of the activities to enjoy at our sovereign shindig along with afternoon tea and refreshments.

We want every visitor to have a gift on the Queen's birthday so, as well as taking a party bag home with you, each adult will be entered into our prize draw for cream teas for two at Patisserie Valerie.

You'll also be placed into into a national draw to visit Buckingham Palace State Rooms, open for viewing to the general public for 10 weeks in July, August and September, followed by **Champagne Afternoon Tea at Fortnum & Mason** and, to top it off, we are throwing in an overnight stay at one of four luxury **Radisson Blu Edwardian Hotels across Central London.**

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SURVIVOR: Frank Williams, centre,, as vicar Timothy Farthing with ARP warden Hodges (Bill Pertwee) and the verger (Teddy Sinclair)

'Vicar' lifts the lid on life in classic comedy Dad's Army

Frank Williams, 85, is on tour again revealing life behind the scenes of top show

THE oldest surviving original cast member of comedy classic Dad's Army will be making two special appearances in Kent next month ahead of the 50th anniversary of the much-loved show.

Frank Williams played eccentric vicar Timothy Farthing in the show which ran from 1968 to 1977 and has proved one of the nation's most endearing and enduring works.

Along with Ian Lavender, who played 'stupid boy' Frank Pike, they are the last remaining survivors of the main cast.

Both also had cameo roles in the recent big screen re-making of the show.

Now Mr Williams, 85, will be making appearances in Bromley and Tenterden as part of a show revealing what life was like in the hit comedy.

"It's been simply wonderful to be part of something so special," he explains. "Although I have spent many years in various film and television roles, being part of Dad's Army is hard to beat."

More Tea Vicar? will be presented by author Chirs Gidney, who wrote Frank Williams' biography.

He explains: "Everybody loves Dad's Army.

"Even after 40 years the series continues to pull huge viewing figures becoming one of the all-time classic greats. It also bridges the age gap like no other.

"People of all ages also love the live show because it's very interactive. We invite the audience to be part of it and they can ask questions. Frank is a master at describing the most hilarious off-screen stories and he shows the audience his own private cine film of the TV cast backstage, which is quite fascinating."

His career, however, streched well beyond just Dad's Army and the audience will join him on a walk down memory lane as he re-lives some of the fascinating and comical highlights of a film, stage and television career spanning nearly 60 years.

He has worked with many of the greats including Tommy Cooper, Harry Worth, Dick Emery and Morecambe and Wise and has appeared in over 30 feature films including three with Norman Wisdom.

His numerous other television series count some of the early days of TV including The Army Game, All Gas & Gaiters, Monty Python's Flying Circus and You Rang M`Lord?

The actor explains: "I'm looking forward to talking about the strange and remarkable things that the audience never see.

"Like the time we were filming an episode of Dad's Army and nearly got flattened by a runaway steam train, or when I watched myself on live TV being operated on in Emergency Ward 10 in the comfort of my own home."

More Tea Vicar? will be performed at the Sinden Theatre in Tenterden on Friday, June 16 at 7.30pm.

The following day, Saturday June 17, he will be performing at the Churchil Theatre in Bromley at 2pm.

Tickets for both shows are on sale now.

For Tenterden visit sidentheatre.com or call 01580 763826, for Bromley visit churchilltheatre.co.uk or call 0203 285 6000.

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£20m Magna Carta star turn at Faversham's Open House

By Chris Britcher
chris.britcher@archant.co.uk

AN early copy of the Magna Carta is set to be the star of the show as the Faversham Society opens the doors for its annual Open House event throughout July.

Now in its 48th year, the event provides the chance to visit 37 private and municipal buildings in the historic market town, with some dating back to medieval times.

The Magna Carta, a copy believed to date back to 1300, is one of just seven drawn up after the signing of the historic document in 1215. It is valued at around £20 million

The event is held over three consecutive Saturdays in July - which this year will be July 1, 8 and 15. The Magna Carta will be on show at the Guildhall on July 8 and 15.

Among the other buildings visitors will get the chance to study, will be George House, a Grade II-listed timber framed building which began life as a farmhouse in the 1600s and is today in private ownership.

The Maison Dieu is a 16th century house built between 1516-1536 containing a number of features of special interest which include a 13th century window, 16th century ceiling with original moulded beams,a stone fireplace of the same period and a restored door arch which contains 12th century windows.

Also open will be the SB Repertor. Built in 1924, it is the first steel barge built by famous barge-masters Horlocks.

A spokesman for the organisers said: "This event is truly unique, an insight into living history, a chance to see how these properties have been preserved and loved over the many years. From the historic creek, the medieval Abbey Street to the Magna Carta, it is one that grows in popularity each year

Admission, which covers all three Saturdays, is £8.50 for the first member of a group, which includes a handbook, then £5 for any additional member of a group, who will received a programme.

The Faversham Society points out some properties will not be open on all three days.

Handbook and programmes will be on sale from June 1 at the Fleur de Lis Heritage Centre and the Shepherd Neame Visitor Centre, or email ticfaversham@btconnect.com.

HISTORIC: The Magna Carta in Faversham will be on display at the Guildhall

Gibbs legacy celebrated

STAYIN' Alive: The Music of the Bee Gees comes to the Astor Theatre in Deal on June 16.

The tribute act will be performing all the band's best known hits. Tickets costing £18-23 are on sale now.

Skeleton's fascinating tale

HANDMADE Theatre will be presenting its acclaimed How Time Flies at Westgate Parks in Cantebury on June 3.

The family show is inspired by history and archaeology and leads the audience through a dig to uncover the story of an ancient skeleton. For details handmadetheatre.co.uk.

The Floyd's live legacy

RELIVE the sounds and atmosphere of the mighty Pink Floyd's live shows at the Stag Theatre in Sevenoaks next week.

I, Floyd recreates the band's live performances on June 3.

Punjabi trio's hit spectacle

THREE top Punjabi singers will entertain the crowds at the Woodville in Gravesend next month.

Manmohan Waris, Kamal Heer and Sangtar will perform all their Punjabi hits live during Punjab Virsa on June 18. Tickets are on sale now from the venue.

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Buddy Holly show arriving

THE world's most successful rock 'n' roll show comes to the Marlowe in Canterbury, from June 13-17.

Buddy – The Buddy Holly Story tells of his meteroric rise and early tragic death.

French mime's return

THE War of the Buttons will be performed by a French theatre company headed by a former Tonbridge schoolgirl on June 17.

Hayli Clifton will appear in the performance at the EM Forster Theatre at Tonbridge School aimed at families and is aimed at both deaf and hearing young audiences.

Can you resist the Cube?

CUBE, a chamber jazz quartet, perform at Broadstairs' Sarah Thorne Theatre on June 10.

It follows the release of their first, eponymous-titled CD, released in October.

Tickets on sale now.

Create wins top award

ASHFORD's Create Music Festival has scooped cultural event of the tear at the 2017 Kent Creative Awards.

The gala ceremony recognises creative individuals, projects and organisations for their contribution to Kent culture. This year's event, headlined by The Selector is on July 22.

Dream marine as town set for fun arts festival

By Chris Britcher
chris.britcher@archant.co.uk

ORGANISERS of the Ramsgate Festival say this year's event will be bigger and better than ever before as it pulls out all the stops in a bid to deliver a week of non-stop entertainment.

Running alongside the Ramsgate Regatta from July 22-30, the theme and key events for the festival have been confirmed - inspired by the Thanet town's royal marina.

Festival director Teresa Askew said "This year's festival theme of 'dream marine' is inspired by our unique harbour, history, beaches, town and coast. We want to really push the boat out, and bring the life of the harbour into the town and onto the beach."

The festival's nine days of entertainment will include a blend of outdoor arts, music, shows, exhibitions, workshops, walks and talks.

Key events will see opera on the beach to start the events, and the screening of a brand new production of Handel's Semele.

There will be a packed programme of opera themed events to help launch the festival, following the success of last year's Big Opera Takeover.

A twilight procession and magical fire display on Ramsgate Main Sands on July 30 will close the festival. Other attractions include the Ramsgate Slide, a one-day installation of a 30m waterslide along the Royal Parade.

Littoral Light II will be a temporary twilight art exhibition, set in the tidal zone of Ramsgate beach on the evening of July 28, by the artists' collective, Article 10.

There will also be the return of Sadie Hennessy's adults-only End Of the Pier Show.

There will also be world music and dance stages plus a festival market in Harbour Parade, plus a selection of walks, talks and exhibitions.

The festival, run by Ramsgate Arts, was prvious known as A Summer Squall until it changed its name and dates last year.

Ramsgate Week Regatta runs from July 23-28, starting with the famous Round the Goodwin Sands Race on July 23.

POPULAR: Last year's opera on the beach was a big hit

LOGO: Festival runs from July 22 to the 30th.

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Hollywood's road trip dedicated to a rising love

From Bake Off to behind the wheel, Kent's home grown star has swapped muffins for the open road

HE might be known for his bread and buns but away from the oven, Paul Hollywood's a petrolhead and loves nothing more than racing cars.

"Baking is my career, it's what I am. The whole presenter thing is an accident. I'm a baker by trade but my hobby was always cars," says The Great British Bake Off judge, who lives near Canterbury.

He's been passionate about motors "for as long as I can remember".

"My dad used to have several cars growing up - nothing particularly special, but I just loved cars," declares Hollywood, who shared his enthusiasm for motors on BBC programmes Racing Legends and Licence To Thrill: Paul Hollywood Meets Aston Martin in 2015.

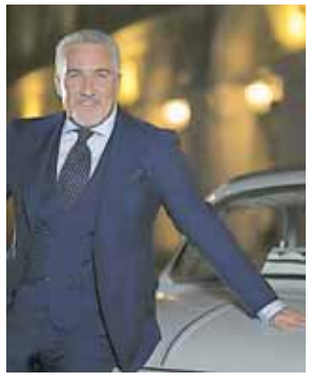
No wonder he describes his latest show, Paul Hollywood's Big Continental Road Trip, as "a dream job for me".

In the three-part series, Hollywood travels to Germany, France and Italy, endeavouring to understand more about each country through its love of cars.

"It didn't feel like work," he says. "The travel was just amazing we went to some really beautiful places. I thought, 'This is magic'."

One of the most memorable experiences was driving around Italy in a Lamborghini alongside Strictly Come Dancing's Bruno Tonioli.

"We nearly got arrested for speeding around Rome. He was petrified, bless him," recalls Hollywood, who was particularly taken with Ivrea in north-west Italy.



BAKER: Paul Hollywood will be seen on our screens tonight.

In Germany, he stopped off to serve up some spicy food from the back of a VW van to some nudists.

"We were in the Kombi van, just going there and spending a couple of hours with these people. They were very funny, absolutely hilarious. I didn't know where to look. Never, ever take your eye off their eyeball. Just keep your head in one place and look at them in the eye."

Was he tempted to strip off? "When they told me, I went, 'No, no, no. I'm not getting my kit off, it's not going to happen'."

Not even for his fans? "They'd be disappointed if I did that!" he laughs.

Hollywood insists he's not disappointed he wasn't part of the new Top Gear line-up.

Besides, he's keeping busy with The Great British Bake Off, having decided to move with the programme to Channel 4, despite former BBC colleagues Mary Berry, Sue Perkins and Mel Giedroyc standing down.

He's earned a reputation for being tough in the Bake Off tent, but that's something he attributes to the programme-makers.

"It's called editing," he laughs. "I'm very easy-going, quite chilled. But at the end of the day if something's wrong then I have to point it out because that's my job. But tough, really? I judge muffins. How the hell is that tough?"

• Paul Hollywood's Big Continental Road Trip begins on BBC Two today, May 28.

Manford warm-up date

COMIC Jason Manford plays a low-key warm-up ahead of a national tour in 2018 at Tunbridge Wells' Trinity Theatre on September 16.

The work in progress show will see audiences get a taste of what major venues will experience when the star of the likes of Have I Got News For You, QI and Live at the Apollo takes it on the road next year. Tickets have already sold-out.

Fringe festival's first

MANOR House in Sidcup is set to host a celebration of arts and music next month, with the launch of the first Sidcup Fringe festival.

Students from Rose Bruford College and Bird College will perform a programme of original short music and drama on June 16 and 17.

It has been organised in partnership with Sidcup Partners and Bexley council.

Vic's headed to Corrie

CHARING comic Vic Reeves will be appearing in long-running soap opera Coronation Street.

Best known for his partnership with Bob Mortimer, reports suggest he'll appear as a shopkeeper in several episodes of the ITV drama.

The 58-year-old told friends he's "over the moon" with the role and that he's dreamt of appearing in it.

Stunt team spectacular

A STUNT performance team will be showcasing their skills in Ramsgate on Monday.

The Drop and Roll Tour will be the centre-piece of a free family event, Spring Spectacular at Government Acre.

Event visitors will see choreographed bike stunts, including transitions, jumps and technical trials riding with commentary.

It runs from 11am to 5pm,

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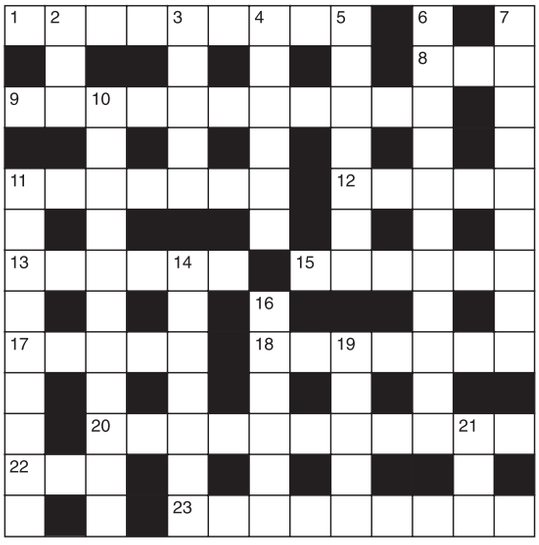


Quick

Across

1. Unchangeable (9)
8. Aged (3)
9. Hardship (11)
11. Hang (7)
12. Smell (5)
13. Sleep (6)
15. Get back (6)
17. Danger (5)
18. Uneasy (7)
20. Wage earner (11)
22. Nothing (3)
23. Consequently (9)

Down

2. Spoil (3)
3. Ceasefire (5)
4. Cognac (6)
5. Abstract (7)
6. Comfort (11)
7. Allegiance (9)
10. Invincible (11)
11. Youth (9)
14. Debt-free (7)
16. Plod (6)
19. Set of rooms (5)
21. Stray (3)

Cryptic

Across

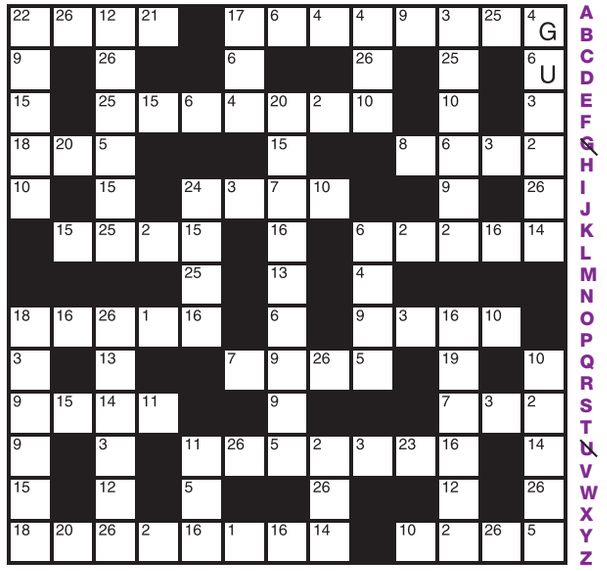
1. He can sing of rich store (9)
8. The first woman of several (3)
9. Functioning in the theatre? (11)
11. Mail from remote fort? (7)
12. Insinuate I am to travel to and fro (5)
13. Single ordinary share of justice? (6)
15. Take no notice of region (6)
17. Prickleback? (5)
18. Give the post to father - given backing and a sharp tip (7)
20. Father dotes badly, being easily moved to pity (4-7)
22. Strike is a popular success (3)
23. A bit of rough fun in drama at the stables? (9)

Down

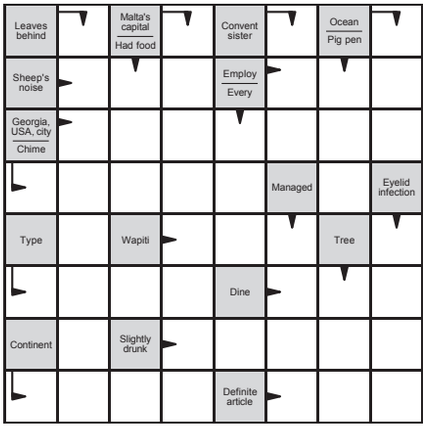
2. Bit of cheer for the joint (3)
3. State of having said a horrible thing (5)
4. Number wanting a drink without soda at first (6)
5. Chased ruler for status on the ladder (7)
6. Callers mean work for her, of course (11)
7. Feel sorry about poor May having to make recompense (9)
10. Sustains the people who are keen (11)
11. Accidental omission of supervision (9)
14. The position of the man substituting at cricket (7)
16. Flat metal disc with hole for getting clothes clean? (6)
19. Level of development of tree (5)
21. Time for some other activities (3)

CODEWORD

This puzzle has no clues. Instead, every number printed in the grid represents a letter, with the same number always representing the same letter.
For example, if 8 turns out to be a V, you can write in V wherever a square contains 8. Using your knowledge of words, complete the puzzle.



Arrowword



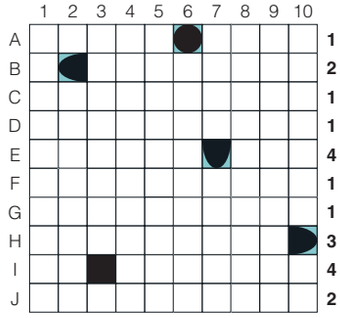
Enter your answers in the direction indicated by the arrows.

Battleships

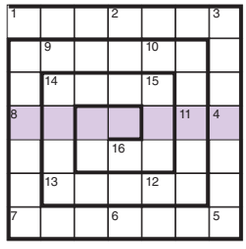
Find where ships shown below are hidden in the grid. The numbers to the right of and below the grid indicate how many of the squares in that row are filled in with ships or parts of ships. The ships do not touch each other, even diagonally. Some of the squares have been filled to start you off.

THE FLEET

1 x Battleship
2 x Cruiser
3 x Destroyer
4 x Submarine



Word Spiral



Starting from 1, fill in the grid clockwise with four-letter words. The last letter of each word becomes the first letter of the next to reveal the key word in the shaded boxes.

1. Lash
2. Cougar
3. Unfortunately
4. Rebuff
5. Beak
6. Heather
7. Happy and pleased
8. Hollow
9. Care for
10. Prima donna
11. Very keen
12. Besmear
13. Group of countries
14. Slap
15. Utter failure!
16. Stopper

Keyword clue: A boy's name

SUDOKU

Hard

				9				3
					2	9	1	4
			8			6		
	4		7		9		5	8
7	3		1		5		2	
		5			3			
1	7	4	6					
9				4				

Easy

	7	3	5			8		
	9			3	7		2	5
4		5			8			3
	6		3		9			
5	1			7		2	3	8
			2			6	9	
7			1		5		2	
	8	7			5			
1			8	1			7	
2								
		6			4	5	8	

Solutions

Arrowword

Battleships

Double Crossword

Cryptic
Across: 1 Chorister; 8 Eve; 9 Operational; 11 Outpost; 12 Imply; 13 Equity; 15 Ignore; 17 Spine; 18 Appoint; 20 Soft-hearted; 22 Hit; 23 Horseplay. Down: 2 Hip; 3 Idaho; 4 Thirty; 5 Ranking; 6 Telephonist; 7 Repayment; 10 Enthusiasts; 11 Oversight; 14 Twelfth; 16 Washer; 19 Plane; 21 Era.

Quick
Across: 1 Immutable; 8 Old; 9 Tribulation; 11 Suspend; 12 Odour; 13 Repose; 15 Regain; 17 Peril; 18 Restive; 20 Breadwinner; 22 Nil; 23 Therefore.
Down: 2 Mar; 3 Truce; 4 Brandy; 5 Epitome; 6 Consolation; 7 Adherence; 10 Insuperable; 11 Stripling; 14 Solvent; 16 Trudge; 19 Suite; 21 Err.

Codeword
1=V, 2=T, 3=I, 4=G, 5=Y, 6=U, 7=P, 8=Q, 9=L, 10=S, 11=D, 12=C, 13=F, 14=R, 15=O, 16=E, 17=J, 18=W, 19=X, 20=H, 21=K, 22=B, 23=M, 24=Z, 25=N, 26=A

Word Spiral
1 Whip; 2 Puma; 3 Alas; 4 Snub; 5 Bill; 6 Ling; 7 Glad; 8 Dent; 9 Tend; 10 Diva; 11 Avid; 12 Daub; 13 Bloc; 14 Cuff; 15 Flop; 16 Plug
Keyword: Douglas

Sudoku - Easy

6	7	3	5	4	2	8	1	9
8	9	1	6	3	7	4	2	5
4	2	5	1	9	8	7	6	3
7	6	2	3	8	9	1	5	4
5	1	9	4	7	6	2	3	8
3	4	8	2	5	1	6	9	7
1	8	7	9	6	5	3	4	2
2	5	4	8	1	3	9	7	6
9	3	6	7	2	4	5	8	1

Sudoku - Hard

4	6	1	5	9	7	2	8	3
8	5	7	3	6	2	9	1	4
3	9	2	8	1	4	6	7	5
2	4	6	7	3	9	1	5	8
5	1	8	4	2	6	7	3	9
7	3	9	1	8	5	4	2	6
6	2	5	9	7	3	8	4	1
1	7	4	6	5	8	3	9	2
9	8	3	2	4	1	5	6	7

PICTURESQUE: The village of Canillas de Albaida. Picture: DAVID GREEN

Taking a walk on the beautiful side

DAVID GREEN enjoyed a walking holiday in the Andalucian hills

In the Andalucian hills about an hour's drive from Malaga sits the Finca El Cerrillo, a small estate with a restored and extended 200-year-old farmhouse, once used as an olive mill.

Sue and Gordon Kind fell in love with the property in 2001. With Gordon's artistic eye – he trained as a sculptor and was once set designer for the Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester – and Sue's administrative abilities, they transformed the farmhouse into a comfortable hotel, now a base for walking holidays offered by the Headwater company.

Inland Andalucia, with its "white villages" – clusters of narrow streets with white-washed houses - is a far cry from bland coastal resorts.

Gordon and Sue sought an opportunity to restore and add to the beauty of the finca while "importing" the relaxed style of hotel they had encountered in the Caribbean.

There are now 14 rooms, some of them in the main building and the rest converted from outbuildings or provided by extensions, most with private sitting areas and a few with their own roof terraces.

Taxis sweep guests from the busy crowds of Malaga Airport eastward along the coast as far as Algarrobo and then up a winding, precipitous road to the quiet, picturesque village of Canillas de Albaida.

At Salares, where we enter the village over a bridge built by the Romans, we sip tinto de verano (red wine of summer) as rotund bar owner Theo presents a feast of food including prawns, pork slices, aubergines fried in oil and salads. The meal is rounded off with oranges from his own trees.

The walks are not strenuous and, apart from the last day when the route is longer, guests are usually back at the hotel early in the afternoon, with plenty of time left to enjoy the wonderful gardens, laze by the pool or stroll through an olive tree plantation.

Villagers prune the trees and harvest the olives in exchange for supplies of oil to the hotel kitchen.

One of the olive trees, with its twisted trunk and branches, has been transformed by Gordon into a tree house, complete with a help-yourself drinks bar.

Inside the farmhouse, Christine the cook is preparing the three-course evening meal, eaten either in the spacious restaurant or on the terrace overlooking the valley.

The food at the finca is superb, from the fresh fruit platters available at breakfast to the three-course dinners in the evening.

My wife, a vegetarian, was full of praise for the special dishes prepared for her.

Wine with dinner is complimentary while guests can help themselves to other drinks from an "honesty bar", settling their bill at the end of the week. If they wish, guests can opt not to go on the organised walks, either choosing to stay around the finca or follow their own routes.

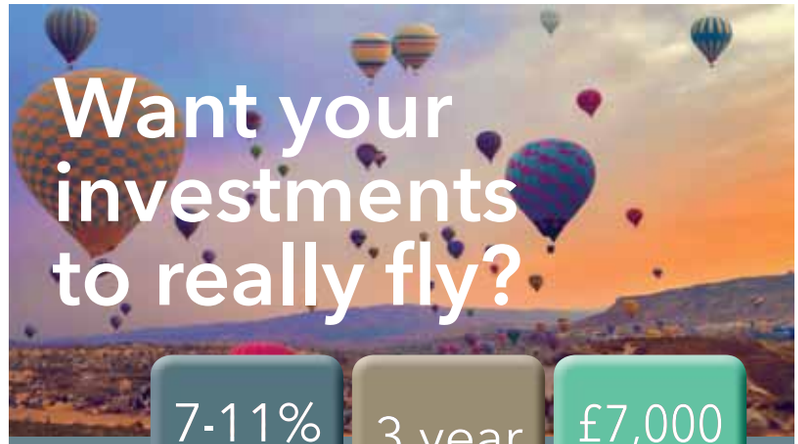
We did this on the last full day, following the track and road down the valley into the village of Archez and returning via Canillas and a steep path known as the goat track - a wonderful way to end a trip to remember...

FACTFILE

Headwater Holidays offers a week's walking or painting holiday at Finca El Cerrillo, inclusive of all meals and transport, from £1,049 per person or £1,229 with British Airways flights from and to Gatwick.

The firm also offers guided and independent walking and cycling holidays in other parts of Spain and throughout Europe and the Caribbean.

Contact details: www.headwater.com, telephone 01606 720033.



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Please include your name and address, although these will be withheld in exceptional circumstances, and a daytime phone number for verification (this will not be published). We reserve the right to edit all letters.

Wonderful world of this newspaper

KOS really is a funny mixture.

The weekly editorial is well-written, rational, balanced and liberal in tone, but the letters page regularly provides evidence that if Hitler came back to earth, he might well receive a welcome, certainly a hearing, in Kent.

Before anyone is outraged by this suggestion, just remember that Hitler was popular with ordinary people who. like so many of the British now, felt there was something wrong with their world and wanted scapegoats and a leader who would deal with them.

In last weekend's paper two of your correspondents seem appalled by the possibility that the Brexit settlement may not ride roughshod over those of their fellow citizens (a minimum of 15.1 million of them) who dare to have a different vision of what might be good for their country.

May I suggest a solution to their difficulty? All those who voted Remain should be rooted out, rounded up and shot. Now that would be strong leadership.

Diana Webb, Maidstone

May is not flavour of the month

THE government, and particularly Theresa May, would like you to believe that this election is all about Brexit.

Yes our departure from the EU is important but there are many broader issues that will still be with us when the dust has settled on Brexit. The reality, of course, is that the election was called for narrow party political reasons.

But since we are going to the polls, voters should look at the record of the government. And what a woeful record it is.

On management of the economy, supposedly the Conservatives' strong point, despite all the years of austerity our national debt stands at about £1.7 trillion and the deficit is still over £52 billion, with successive pledges to eliminate it abandoned.

Inequality has worsened; we have a housing crisis; personal debt is increasing; real wages have fallen; the NHS and social care are creaking; child poverty has risen; schools are starved of funds and local government is asked to do more with less.

If Theresa May's government is returned we'll need a strong opposition to hold it to account and stop the drift to the right.

I'd urge all voters to look carefully at this government's record and at the promises of the other parties.

Our unfair voting system ensures that the views of many, especially in safe seats, are not represented in Parliament.

Richard Byatt, Maidstone

LETTER OF THE WEEK

Taking back control? You're having a laugh

POOR old S Reeves, Terry Hudson and Richard West [KoS, letters, last week]. Their anti EU mania runs so deep that even now, though the EU referendum delivered the result they had craved for so long, the sense of betrayal is never far away.

In the next year, though they'll seek to deny it, they will discover they've been sold an utter dud. All options open to the UK now will see us end up in a sub optimal position, desperately seeking the goodwill of others, all of whom have their own preoccupations. The idea of the UK having taken "back control" last year looks as laughable now as it did on the June 24 2016.

Despite 40 years of anti EU propaganda these anti Europeans could not agree amongst themselves what the post Brexit settlement should look like. They still cannot agree on it. Theresa May has unilaterally decided this means out of the single market and customs union, despite there being no mandate for this disruptive and economically damaging scenario. But what happens then? No one knows. Obsessing over minuscule and worthless trade deals with far off former colonies?

We do know the Brexit shock hasn't been costed in the Tory manifesto for this election. An election that, lest we forget, we were absolutely not going to have.

The rank naiveté of the hard leavers is exposed every time they complain about the "betrayal" of a softer Brexit. Yet none of them can explain how a farmer will cope with 40 per cent tariffs on their goods, how carmakers employing just-in-time methods are supposed to adapt to bureaucratic customs checks, how growers are supposed to source workers in a violently shrinking labour market to get their crops out the ground.

The bald fact is that there just are no "opportunities" arising from Brexit, the fallout is entirely negative in every conceivable way.

Ben Murphy, Sittingbourne

Just why you vote for the Tories?

I DO not understand why anyone would vote Conservative.

Under the Conservatives, the NHS is severely underfunded. GP surgeries are closing. The Kent and Canterbury cannot train new doctors due to the lack of consultants. Elderly people must already sell their houses to pay for residential care, and now they must sell their houses to pay for care at home - if they can get it.

I can afford to lose my winter fuel allowance, but it is a tiny drop in the ocean compared to covering the costs of social care.

The Conservatives will introduce more grammar schools. But will there be any more funding, or will parents be asked to make up the shortfall?

Education for those who can afford it, other kids can go to 'sink' schools.

Why trust the Conservatives with Brexit? They led us into a situation where we have no idea what the outcome is likely to be. Teresa May can't tell us. Damian Green says one thing, Iain Duncan Smith another.

Even Ukip does not trust them. And they have the nerve to accuse Labour of being chaotic.

As for the economy, our young people can't afford houses, our workers can't afford food, and our old people are being left to rot. The pound continues to fall. However, Kentish turkeys will probably go on voting for Christmas.

Rose Meade, Faversham

Taylor's green around the gills

I REALLY must protest at the nonsense claimed by Keith Taylor [KoS, letters, last week].

He repeats the emotive claim that nurses are going to food banks. The last time I looked, nurses started on £21,692 going on to £28,180 and with experience from £26,041 going on to £34,876.

I've worked with people who live on almost half that amount, so either the food bank story is a lie, or they're very poor money managers.

If you tell a lie often enough it'll be believed.

For the record, my wife and I are pensioners with a combined income about the same as the nurses starting salary and we buy our own food, pay for our own holidays and drive our own car.

By the way, if Mr. Taylor can be bothered, he could go to Africa, or the Middle East and see what real poverty is and it's not being unable to buy the latest trainers, or have a 50 inch TV. Maybe if they stopped importing foreign labour, our 1.6 million on the dole could get a job and improve their lot.

Phil Granger, West Malling

Why oppose the Manston dream?

IT never ceases to amaze at people's attitude, one being Mr P Potter [KoS, letters, last week] what does he want Manston full of houses when there is no work in the area?

What we want is companies coming into Thanet and with Brexit almost certainly on the horizon, we need to trade with countries further a field and Manston as an airport could help considerbly in terms of freight, especially with Heathrow and Gatwick over capacity.

Get behind the people who are prepared to invest in Thanet and who knows maybe there will be employment for all

AB Martin, via email

KOS 10 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

AS part of our commitment to providing the best service to you, we have produced our 10 guiding principles

Kent on Sunday will:

1) Be available in every postcode in Kent.
2) Be fair, accurate and balanced.
3) Be written in clear, concise English.
4) Not be overly sensational.
5) Have a sense of humour.
6) Have an easily understood division between news, comment and advertising.
7) Seek to celebrate as well as constructively criticise.
8) Highlight topical issues of concern to people living in the county.
9) Spotlight individual cases which raise broader concerns.
10) Champion causes that it feels are important to the well-being of the county and its people.

We hope you enjoy Kent on Sunday.

images of kent

Barge sailing on Faversham Creek

by **Brian Summers from Faversham**

To see your photograph printed, email **editorial@kosmedia.co.uk**,. Be sure to include your name, address and a contact telephone number. Unfortunately we cannot return any prints, and please do not send negatives.

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4 & 25 June, 3 Sept & 11 Oct, 2017; 9 June, 15 Sept & 4 Oct, 2018 - Quote: RH-KOS

Come with us on a relaxing river cruise on the majestic Rhine and beautiful Moselle rivers in southern Germany. Relax on board the MV Prinses Christina as she glides silkily past romantic hilltop castles, picturesque vineyards and historic riverside towns. Our cruise visits Andernach, Cochem, Boppard, Rudesheim, Koblenz, Konigswinter and Cologne. Accommodation is in comfortable outside twin cabins with breakfast, lunch and dinner each day included as well as morning coffee and afternoon tea.

INCLUDED: Escorted throughout • Return rail travel from London St Pancras and Ebbsfleet OR flights with luggage from a choice of UK airports - supp't may apply • 7-night full board cruise on the MV Prinses Christina sharing a twin bed outside cabin on Cabin Deck - upgrades available • Transfers abroad

Isle of Man Railways & Waterwheels

5 days
half board
from
£649pp

By Air from Gatwick

11 August, 2017 - Quote: IM8-KOS

A truly unique Island, the Isle of Man isn't part of the United Kingdom or the European Union but a possession of the British Crown. Situated between the coasts of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, in the middle of the Irish Sea, it boasts stunning coastlines, rich countryside and picturesque towns rich in folklore and culture. This holiday includes visits to Castle Rushem, Silverdale Glen Waterwheel and Peel and includes journeys on the Isle of Man Steam Railway, the Manx Electric Railway and the Snaefell Mountain Railway.

INCLUDED: Escorted throughout • Return flights with hand luggage to the Isle of Man from a choice of UK airports - supp't may apply • 4 nights stay at the 3 star Rutland Hotel, Douglas • 4 breakfasts & 4 dinners • Excursions as stated • Journeys on Isle of Man Steam Railway, Manx Electric Railway and Snaefell Mountain Railway • Airport to hotel transfer on arrival and departure

60s Rock the Rhine Christmas Markets River Cruise

5 days
full board
plus from
£699pp

Boppard, Rüdesheim, Mainz, Koblenz & Cologne

By Rail from Ebbsfleet or Air from Gatwick

5 December, 2017 - Quote SP12-KOS

Join us on a fun and friendly cruise down memory lane as we party to 60s sounds with a star tribute artiste and GN's entertainment team along the magnificent Rhine. Our cruise on board the 4-star ms Swiss Pearl takes in magical Christmas markets in the riverside towns of Koblenz, Rüdesheim and Mainz, plus the popular town of Boppard with a Christmas shop open all year. These lovely attractions are just a stroll from the ship, so there's no coach transfers or optional excursions to buy.

INCLUDED: 60s music themed entertainment programme • House wine, draft beer, juices, soft drinks, water, tea & coffee from the bar 10am to 1am daily, and served at lunch & dinner • Escorted Return Eurostar travel from St Pancras and Ebbsfleet OR return flights from a choice of UK airports - supp't may apply • 4 nights full board plus cruise on the 4-star ms Swiss Pearl • Transfers abroad • Services of our Cruise Director on board

Rhine New Year Party River Cruise

5 days
full board
PLUS from
£749pp

Cologne, Koblenz & Rüdesheim

By Rail from Ebbsfleet or Air from Gatwick

29 December, 2017 - Quote RN12-KOS

Welcome in the New Year with the splendours and stunning scenery along the Rhine on this relaxing river cruise on board the 4-star Mps Switzerland II which hosts you in style with all meals, selected free drinks and entertainment in an informal, fun and friendly atmosphere. This holiday visits the famous towns of Cologne, Koblenz, and Rüdesheim where we welcome in the New Year with a celebration dinner and entertainment.

INCLUDED: Entertainment • Beer, wine by the glass, and soft drinks served at lunch and dinner and from 10am to 1am at the bar • Escorted rail travel from St Pancras and Ebbsfleet OR return flights with luggage from a choice of UK airports - supp't may apply • 4-nights full board cruise on the 4-star MPS Switzerland II • Transfers abroad • Services of our Cruise Director on board

*Conditions apply to low deposits - please call for details

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READY: Renault's new Koleos large sport utility vehicle can now be ordered ahead of its summer arrival.

Renault goes large in SUV market with the Koleos

RENAULT has opened the order books for its new five-seater Koleos sport utility vehicle, priced from £27,500.

The large D-segment SUV, which expands Renault's crossover line-up alongside compact Captur and mid-size Kadjar, will be available in two different trim levels, with Dynamique S Nav serving as the entry-level variant, while Signature Nav will cost up to £34,200.

The all-new Koleos is available with 130PS 1.6-litre and 175PS 2.0-litre turbo diesel engines.

The 1.6-litre unit is mated to front-wheel drive and a six-speed manual gearbox while the 2.0-litre is available only with Renault's All-Mode 4×4 system – with auto, lock and 2WD modes – and six-speed manual or automatic transmissions. Ground clearance of 210mm gives all-terrain ability.

Exceptional interior space for five occupants was a main focus of the design process with the Koleos providing a comfortable, spacious cabin thanks to its opening panoramic sunroof and rear passenger leg room among the very best in class.

The level of safety equipment available on the Koleos is impressive, with entry-level models being fitted with a suite of advanced driver assistance systems, including emergency braking, blind spot and lane departure warning, hill start assist and a system to recognise traffic signs and warn if speeding, as standard. All models also benefit from rear parking cameras and front and rear parking sensors.

Dynamique S Nav might be the entry-level trim but standard specification includes a seven-inch touchscreen infotainment system, panoramic sunroof, part-leather upholstery, dual-zone climate control, hands-free keycard, Bluetooth connectivity and audio streaming, 18in alloys and front cup-holders which can heat and cool drinks.

The Renault Koleos is now available to order now with customer deliveries starting in summer.

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Motorline ŠKODA Medway
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0843 658 9764 www.motorline.co.uk/skoda

Official fuel consumption for the ŠKODA Kodiaq range in mpg (litres/100km): Urban 31.0 (9.1) to 48.7 (5.8); Extra Urban 44.1 (6.4) to 61.4 (4.6); Combined 38.2 (7.4) to 56.5 (5.0). CO_2 emissions for the ŠKODA Kodiaq range are 170 to 131 g/km. Standard EU test figures are for comparative purposes and may not reflect real driving results.

Kodiaq's bear necessity for family life

Skoda bursts on to the large SUV scene with a vehicle named after an Alaskan bear which packs a mighty roar. But can it compete with the best in class?

WHEN it comes to bums on seats Skoda is sitting pretty. As its all-new Kodiaq, the brand's first seven-seater and large sport utility vehicle, goes on sale next week, the brand is already riding high with a record 80,732 UK sales last year.

This year it launches two new models and facelifts four others. Leading the way is the Kodiaq, named after a bear on an island off Alaska, which attracted 30,000 plus 'hand-raisers' expressing serious interest after seeing the VisionS concept – the most every for Skoda.

Bold, strong angles and sharp creases give this SUV an imposing presence, shown off best in strong, metallic colours, bring something more premium to the Skoda line-up.

The turbo engine line-up sees 125PS and 150PS 1.4-litre petrol, the latter cutting to two cylinders to save fuel on a light throttle, and 180PS 2.0-litre petrol and 150 and 190PS 2.0-litre diesels.

The 150PS units are offered with manual and DSG automatic gearboxes and two and four-wheel drive, the more powerful engines are auto and 4x4 only.

Skoda engineers have nailed the combination of ride and roadholding with the Kodiaq both rewarding and comfortable to drive especially the heavier 4x4 diesel which feels even more planted on the road, up there with the best in this class.

Agile and well-mannered on twisty, cross-country routes with good steering feel, body roll is kept in check through fast corners which makes it thoroughly entertaining.

What you also notice, or rather don't notice, is what's going on under the tyres with the smoothing, soothing supple suspension doing a fine job soaking up poor surfaces.

One of the largest SUVs in its class, the well-appointed interior takes Skoda to new levels of quality and ambience. It's a really pleasant place to be.

It's bright and airy, adding to the feeling of space, with shapely and supportive seats. Long-legged passengers can stretch out in the back with the 60/40 split bench sliding

Skoda has every reason to be optimistic about the Kodiaq. It can compete with the best in class, is hugely spacious, family friendly and competitively priced with affordable, attractive finance deals.

SKODA KODIAQ 1.4 TSI 150PS DSG FWD automatic

Price: £21,565 to £34,050

Engine tested: 1,395cc, 150PS

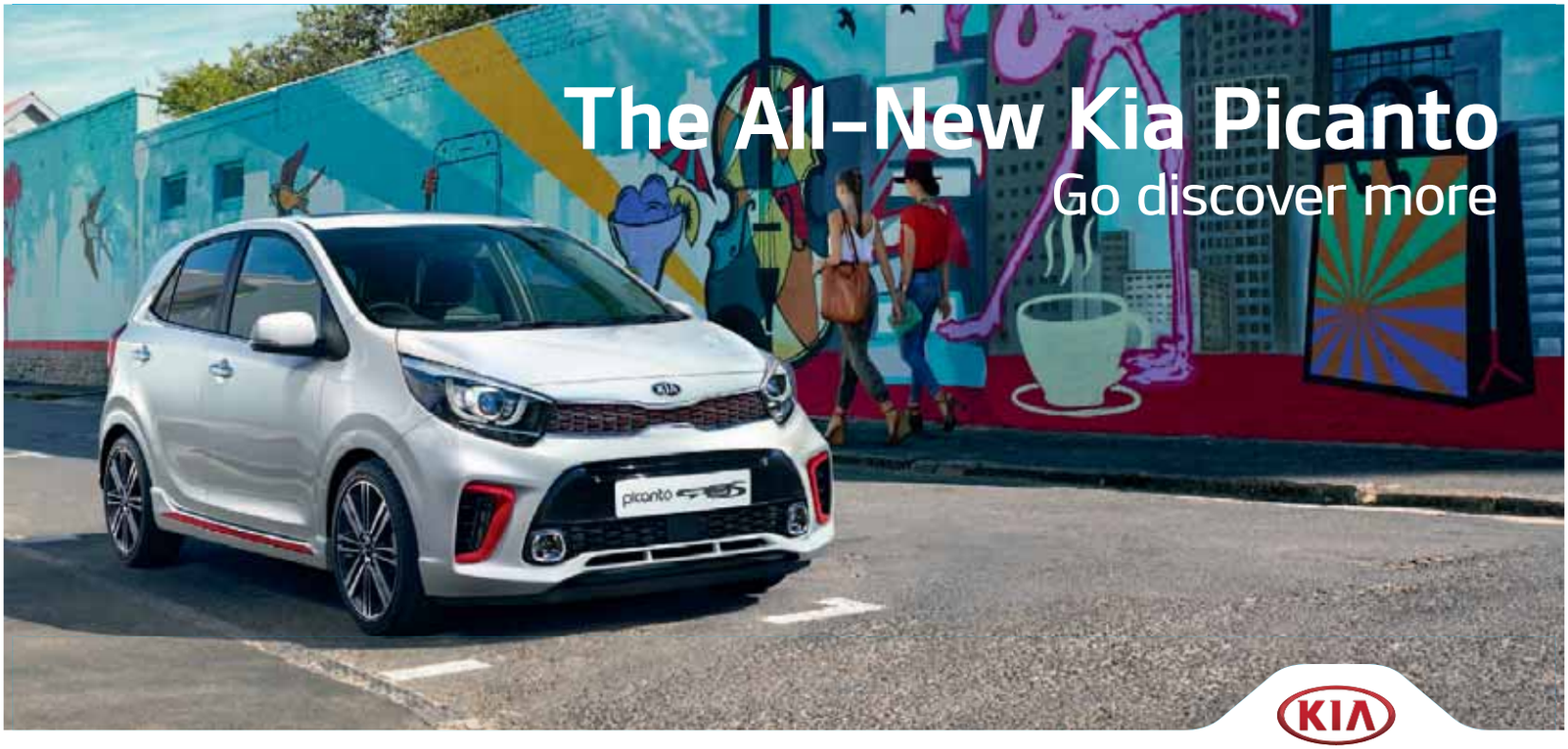
Performance: 0-62mph in 9.6 seconds; top speed 123mph

MPG: Urban 37.7; extra urban 50.4; combined 44.8

CO2 emissions: 143g/km

Warranty: Three years or 60,000 miles

Will it fit in the garage?: L 4,697mm; W (including door mirrors) 2,087mm; H (including roof rails) 1,676mm



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Motability

*2017 C-HR Icon 5 door Coupe FWD 1.2 VVT-i Manual at £595 Advance Payment. Model shown is C-HR Dynamic 5 door Coupe FWD 1.2 VVT-i Manual at £1,795 Advance Payment, AYGO x-press 5 door 1.0 VVT-i x-shift at Nil Advance Payment, Auris Icon 5 door 1.6 D-4D Manual at £95 Advance Payment, Auris Touring Sports Icon 5 door 1.2T VVT-i Manual at £895 Advance Payment and Verso Icon 7-Seat 1.6 V-matic Manual at £295 Advance Payment. Subject to availability. Please note that a total of 60,000 miles over three years are allowed on the Motability Contract Hire Scheme. Offer valid between 1st April and 30th June 2017. Available as part of the Motability Contract Hire Scheme.

C-HR Dynamic 5 door Coupe FWD 1.2 VVT-i Manual. Official Fuel Consumption Figures in mpg (l/100km): Urban 38.1 (7.4), Extra Urban 55.4 (5.1), Combined 47.8 (5.9). CO_2 Emissions 135g/km. AYGO x-press 5 door 1.0 VVT-i x-shift. Official Fuel Consumption Figures in mpg (l/100km): Urban 56.5 (5.0), Extra Urban 78.5 (3.6), Combined 68.9 (4.1). CO_2 Emissions 95g/km. Auris Icon 5 door 1.6 D-4D Manual. Official Fuel Consumption Figures in mpg (l/100km): Urban 55.4 (5.1), Extra Urban 74.3 (3.8), Combined 65.7 (3.8). CO_2 Emissions 110g/km. Auris Touring Sports Icon 5 door 1.2T VVT-i Manual. Official Fuel Consumption Figures in mpg (l/100km): Urban 47.9 (5.9), Extra Urban 67.3 (4.2), Combined 58.9 (4.8). CO_2 Emissions 112g/km. Verso Icon 7-Seat 1.6 V-matic Manual. Official Fuel Consumption Figures in mpg (l/100km): Urban 53.3 (5.3), Extra Urban 68.9 (4.1), Combined 62.8 (4.5). CO_2 Emissions 119g/km. All mpg and CO_2 figures quoted are sourced from official EU regulated laboratory test results. These are provided to allow comparisons between vehicles and may not reflect your actual driving experience.

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Bell hails Kent's 'absolute talent'

Sam Billings is in the squad for the ICC Champions Trophy

Cricket

By Phil Jones
editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

FORMER England batsman Ian Bell is convinced Kent's Sam Billings' experience in the big-match arena will hold him in perfect stead for the upcoming ICC Champions Trophy.

The wicket-keeper is no stranger to the international scene, with 11 ODIs and ten T20Is already to his name since making his debut two years ago.

But Billings has not stopped there, becoming a feared batsman across the globe with spells in Pakistan and Australia domestic leagues, while recently plying his trade in the Indian Premier League.

It's overseas where Bell and Billings have previously locked horns, playing Down Under for the Perth Scorchers and Sydney Sixers respectively, choosing to spend winters away from the comforts of home.

And Bell, a veteran of two ICC Champions Trophy campaigns, is confident that experience – coupled with his undeniable talent – can make him a positive influence in England's plans.

"I played a little bit against Sam in the Big Bash, and it's the only time I've ever really seen him close up," said the five-time Ashes winner.

"But he's an absolute talent isn't he? He's got all the shots, plays aggressive cricket and what we are seeing now is that a lot of guys are getting experience in the big t20 tournaments around the world – and he's one of them.

"He shouldn't get phased by the big occasion, so the more guys are learning in these world class tournaments then the better it is for England.

"Again, it just adds another dimension to the England side; he is another one who shows the strength in depth and how good the squad is."

However, Billings is one of three wicket-keepers who could all arguably sit in the side for their battling alone, joining Yorkshire's Jonny Bairstow on the sidelines, though both are in the squad for the showcase tournament.

The ICC Champions Trophy on June 1-18 will see the best eight ODI teams in the world play in Birmingham, Cardiff and London. Tickets available at icc-cricket.com/tickets

STAR: Kent's Sam Billings has won high praise from Ashes hero Ian Bell who believes he is showing real class Pictures: ADY KERRY

Gillingham boss Pennock shuffles his pack

Football

SOME eight players are set to be released by Gillingham as boss Ady Pennock shuffles his pack following the conclusion of the League One season.

The Gills avoided relegation on the final day with a 0-0 draw away at Northampton Town before the club confirmed last week Pennock will remain in the dugout at Priestfield for the coming campaign.

Meanwhile, former boss Peter Taylor has also returned to Medway in a director of football role, which will see him largely responsible for recruitment over the coming weeks.

As the pair look to freshen things up, the club have announced that Mitch Dickenson, Rory Donnelly, Chris Herd, Ryan Jackson, Ollie Muldoon, Henry Newcombe, Emmanuel Osadebe and Zesh Rehman will all be released upon the expiration of their contracts, while goalkeeper Stuart Nelson and midfielder Billy Knott have been placed on the transfer list.

BOSS: Ady Pennock

Meanwhile, the club has offered new deals to four of its current crop - strikers Greg Cundle and Cody McDonald, midfielder Elliott List and winger Josh Parker - as it looks to propel itself back up towards the promotion places next season.

A spokesperson said: "The club would like to thank those departing players for their efforts during their time with the Gills. We wish them the best of luck in the future."

Elsewhere, the club completed its first signing of the summer with the addition of defender Alex Lacey from Yeovil Town

He joins on a two-year deal.

Sport Shorts

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Shakey leads tributes to MotoGP champion

KENT'S superbike star Shane 'Shakey' Byrne said he is "absolutely gutted" by the death of former MotoGP world champion Nicky Hayden.

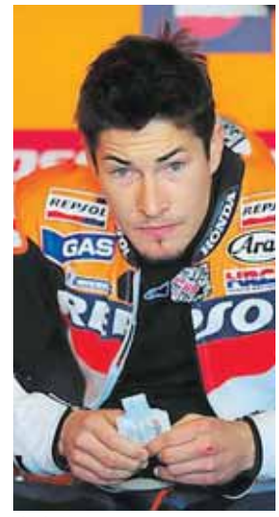
The 35-year-old American was injured in a cycling accident on the Rimini coastline of Italy last Wednesday.

News of his death was first communicated by the hospital where he was being treated, while a statement was also issued on behalf of his family.

Hayden suffered "severe polytrauma" - multiple traumatic injuries - after a collision with a car, the Bufalini Hospital in Cesena confirmed.

Posting on social media, five-time champion Byrne, from Sittingbourne, said: "Absolutely gutted a true legend has passed, a nicer guy in the paddock you couldn't ask to meet, keep it pinned up there."

Hayden's fiancee Jackie, mother Rose and brother Tommy were at his side in the intensive care unit when he died on Monday.



RIP: Nicky Hayden

HOME: Maidstone's Gallagher Stadium

Stones top goalscorer signs on for next year

MAIDSTONE United's top goalscorer last season has extended his stay at the Gallagher Stadium.

Jamaican international Jamar Loza has attracted interest from clubs in the EFL and National League in recent weeks, but has put pen to paper on a one-year deal with the Stones.

Loza joined last October following his release from Norwich City and committed his immediate future to the club in January when he signed a contract until the end of last season.

The 23-year-old chipped in with some vital goals, most memorably scoring a hat trick – the first of his career – against Woking in March.

However, the club also announced that Alex Flisher would be departing the Gallagher after eight years ahead of the upcoming season.

Kickboxer handed funding boost

A FIVE-TIME world kickboxing champion and one-time world Taekwondo champion has received £500 from his college to help support upcoming competitions in Germany and Ireland.

Elliott Allen, a business administration apprentice who has trained at East Kent College's Broadstairs campus, joined Master Wolf's Academy of Taekwon-Do & Kickboxing in Margate aged 13.

He secured his black belt in 2013 and has enjoyed great success since at amateur level.

The 20-year-old said: "At certain tournaments, it's possible to be scouted for the Olympics or by different organisations so that's always an option and a goal.

"I've been overwhelmed with the sponsorship offer as I normally self-fund the competitions. This will certainly help me progress."

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